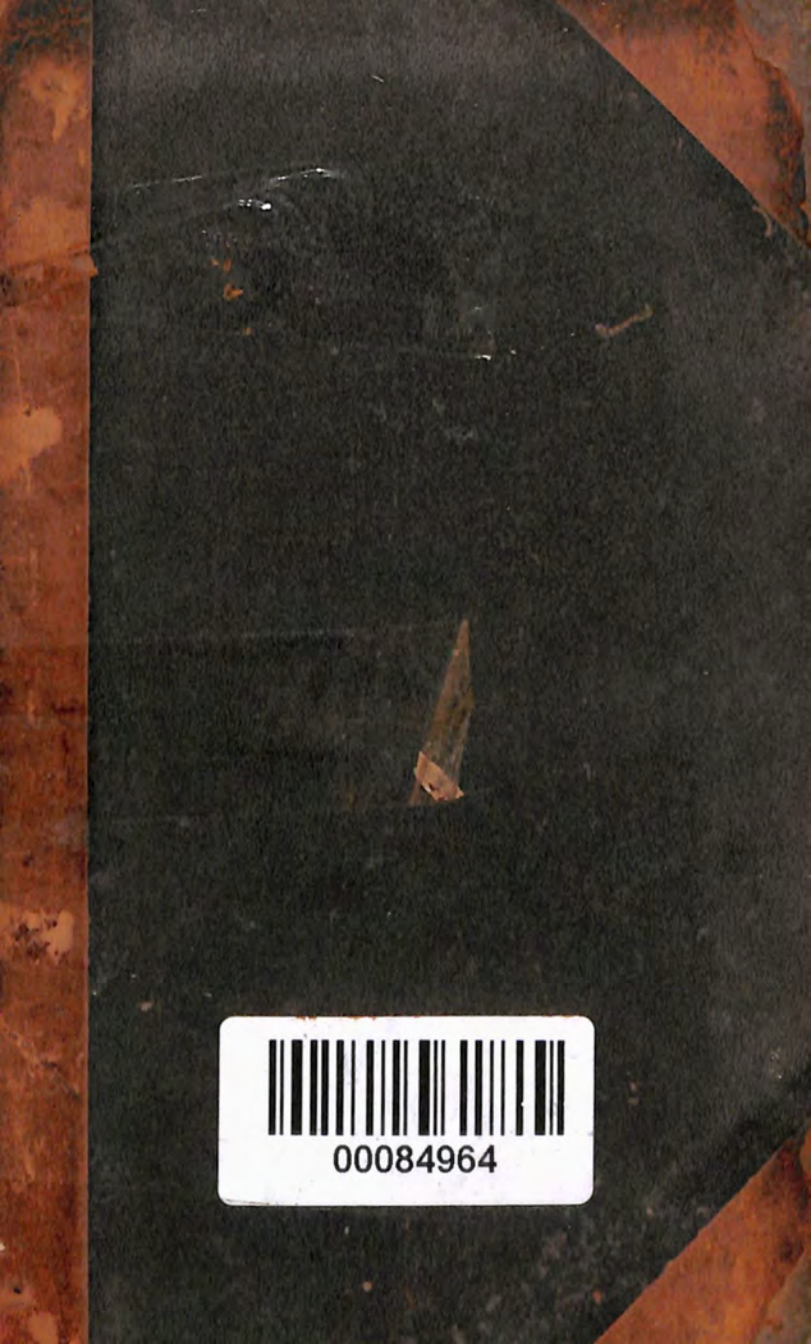

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OF THE

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WILLOX THE WIZARD AND HIS COTTAGE.

HIGHLAND RAMBLES,

AND

LONG LEGENDS TO SHORTEN THE WAY.

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BY

SIR THOMAS DICK LAUDER, BART.

AUTHOR OF "AN ACCOUNT OF THE MORAY FLOODS," "THE WOLFE OF BADENOCH," "LOCHANDHU," ETC.

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HIGHLAND RAMBLES.

FEUDAL HEROES.

DOMINIE.—That same Allan with the Red Jacket was surely a terrible chield. I'm thinking that his moral and religious yeddication must have been *vurra* much neglected.

CLIFFORD (*gravely*).—I should strongly suspect so.

DOMINIE.—Something might surely have been made of him by subjeckin him to proper early nurture and restraint.

CLIFFORD.—Aye, there is no saying what might have been made of him if you had had the flogging of him, Mr. Macpherson.

DOMINIE.—Preserve me, sir! no salary upon yearth could have tempted me to undertake the flagellation of such a birky.

CLIFFORD.—Why, to be sure he might have rebelled a little under the lash; and if he had once run away from you, you would have been somewhat troubled to have caught him again. He would have been a grand fellow for a steeple chase. He would have beaten the world on foot across a country.

DOMINIE.—These MacKenzies and MacDonells were fearful chaps. I have many a story about them.

GRANT.—I have a few myself; and a legend which a friend gave me of a MacDonell of Glengarry and a Lord Kintail has this moment occurred to me, suggested by its similarity in certain circumstances to part of that to which we have been listening.

AUTHOR.—Will you favour us with it?

CLIFFORD.—If he does, it must be by my especial licence. Our friend, Mr. MacPherson, is first in my book. But as I see he has lighted a fresh cigar, and as Grant has smoked his to the stump, he may e'en end it by throwing it into the fire,

and commence his tale without farther loss of time.

GRANT.—I bow to your supreme will.

CLIFFORD.—Pray make it short, if you please, for I begin to be rather sleepy, and I should be sorry to affront you by yawning. Besides, I mean to be up betimes to-morrow to try for a salmon.

GLENGARRY'S REVENGE.

My legend has to do with that very Castle of Eilean Donan with which yours has already made us so well acquainted. The time of the action was about the early part of the seventeenth century, and the great actor in it was a very celebrated MacDonell of Glengarry, whose name I have forgotten, but who is said to have been remarkable for his gigantic figure and Herculean strength. The Lord Kintail of that period was a great favourite with the court, so that he thereby rose to great power and influence, which he very naturally employed, according to the laudable custom of those days, in humbling his enemies. Amongst these, none bore him a larger share of animosity than his hereditary foes, the MacDonells of Glen-

garry. It was not in their nature tamely to submit to the dominion which Kintail was permitted to exercise with comparative impunity over some of the other clans. On the contrary, they were frequently disposed not only to resist themselves, but they also very often found means to stir up others to resistance, and in this way they sometimes furnished Kintail with specious grounds for accusing them, when all apology for doing so might have been otherwise wanting.

It happened that the chief of Glengarry was on one occasion engaged for some days in a hunting expedition in that range of his own country, which surrounds the sea lake of Loch Hourn, already so often mentioned in the last legend. The sun was setting on a mild and beautiful evening, and the breeze was blowing softly from the sea, when, as Glengarry was returning from the chase, attended by a small party of his followers, he espied a couple of gallies standing inwards towards the very part of the shore where stood the little group of black bothies, that at such times formed his temporary place of encampment. Doubtful whether the approaching vessels might contain friends or foes, he

deemed it prudent to put himself and his people into ambush behind some broken ground, where they might lie concealed until they could patiently observe the progress and the motions of those who came, and so judge as to the result.

"Knowest thou the rig of those craft, Alaister More?" demanded Glengarry of his henchman, as they peered together over the black edge of a moss bank, and scanned the approaching sails with earnest eyes. "Whence may they come, thinkest thou?"

"I would not say but they may be Kintail's men," replied Alaister.

"Kintail's men!" exclaimed Glengarry, "what would bring Kintail's men here at this time?"

"I'm not saying that I am just exactly right," replied Alaister, "but I'm thinking it looks like them."

"Curses on them!" said Glengarry bitterly, "they are bold to venture hither while I am here."

"They are so, I'm thinking," said Alaister; "but it may be that they have no guess that Glengarry is here. But, troth, that Kintail holds his head so high now-a-days, that I'm judging his

men think themselves free to thrust in their noses just where they like: He's king of the north-west, as a man might say."

"Accursed be his dastard dominion!" said Glengarry, with bitterness of expression; "and shame upon the slavish fools that yield their necks as foot-stools to his pride. Is't not galling to see it? Is't not galling to see men of wisdom and bravery,—such a man as my staunch friend and ally, MacLeod for instance, yielding so ready an obedience to one whom all should unite to oppose, overthrow, and crush as a common enemy."

"That's very true that you're saying, Glengarry!" observed Alaister; "but I'm thinking that they are not all just blessed with your spirit. If they had been so, I'm judging that the MacCraws could not have been left as they were without help but what they got from you."

"By all that is good, it was our help alone that saved them," cried Glengarry in an animated tone. "Half of them would have been hanged on the gallows-tree but for our interference. The MacKenzies had no reason to pride themselves on the event of that day, nor had we any cause to boast

of the zeal of those whom we have been wont to reckon among our allies."

"Troth, you're not wrong there, Glengarry," said Alaister. "So I'm judging that we must even go on to trust to our own MacDonell swords in all time coming; and we have reason to be thankful that their blades are not just made of cabbage stalks."

"Thank God, indeed, that they are made of better metal!" said Glengarry, smiling proudly. "And small as this our party is, would, with all my heart, that these were Kintail's men, with Kintail himself at the head of them!"

"I should not be that sorry to see Kintail," said Alaister.

"We should give him a hotter welcome than this cold coast might lead him to look for," said Glengarry.

"We'll not be slow in giving him that same, I'm thinking," said Alaister.

"Stay! dost thou not make out a banner yonder?" demanded Glengarry.

"I'm thinking I do see something like a banner," replied Alaister.

"With this failing light we cannot hope even to guess at the bearing with which it may be charged," said Glengarry, straining his eyes, "but if that be a banner, as I believe it to be, then is there certainly a chief there. Look to your arms, MacDonells, and let us be prepared for what may happen!"

By degrees the gallies drew nearer and nearer; but as the night was falling fast, their forms grew less and less distinct as their bulk swelled in the eyes of the MacDonells, till at last they came looming towards the shore like two dark opaque undefinable masses, which were suddenly reduced, by the displacement of their sails, to about one-fourth part of the size they had grown to. For a time they were rocked to and fro until their keels became fixed in the sand by the receding tide. The dusky figures they contained were then seen pouring out from them, and passing like shadowy spectres across a gleam of light that was reflected on the wet sand from the upper part of the sky; and they showed so formidably in numbers, as to render some short council of war necessary before assaulting them with an inferior force, not from any fear of defeat on the part of him who took this

precaution, but dictated by his prudence to prevent all risk of the escape of those whom they were about to attack.

Whilst Glengarry was thus concerting his measures, the strangers were seen moving in a body towards the cluster of huts, which stood at something less than an hundred yards from the water side, and they speedily disappeared within their walls, and lights soon afterwards began to start up within them, as if they were preparing to make themselves comfortable for the night. Glengarry observed this, and in order that he might lull all apprehension of attack, he resolved to give them full time to employ themselves in cookery, or in whatever other occupation they might find to be necessary.

The broken ground which concealed the Mac-Donells, discharged a small rill, that ran, between banks of mossy soil, in a diagonal line, and opened on the sand at a point almost opposite to the spot where the two gallies were lying. No sooner was the chief of Glengarry satisfied that the time was come when the assault could be most opportunely made, than he led his handful of men silently down between the hollow banks of the brook,

so as to get unperceived between the enemy and their vessels. So far every thing went well with them, but as they debouched from the mouth of the water-course, the partial light that gleamed from the upper part of the sky, glanced unexpectedly on the blades of their naked claymores, and instantly a loud bugle blast blew shrilly from on board the nearer of the two gallies.

"Dunvegan! Dunvegan!" cried a loud voice from the bothies, after the bugle had ceased.

In an instant their little black heaps gave forth their living contents,—some armed, and others with blazing torches of moss-fir, plucked suddenly from the great fires they had kindled.

"'Tis MacLeod!" said Glengarry in a peevish tone, that sufficiently betrayed the disappointment he felt, that his well-concerted scheme of attack was thus rendered useless. "'Tis but MacLeod, then, after all!"

"Hoo!" said Alaister, "sure enough it's MacLeod and no one else. So we'll be supping, I'm thinking, and drinking together like friends, instead of fighting like wild cats."

"Would it had been otherwise!" said Glengarry, "much as I love MacLeod, I would at this

moment rather a thousand times have encountered the Lord of Kintail. By the rood, but I was more i' the humour for dealing in blows than pledging in beakers! But since it could not be Kintail, I rejoice that it is MacLeod, for as I could desire no better foe than the one, I can have no worthier friend than the other."

"Both good of their kind surely, I'm thinking," said Alaister.

Nothing could exceed the joy and cordiality of the two friends at thus meeting so unexpectedly. The fattest buck of the chase was dragged towards a fire, kindled for culinary purposes in one of the huts,—steaks cut from its haunch were added to the fare which MacLeod's people were preparing, and after a hasty and unceremonious meal, the two chiefs retired with some of those in whom they reposed most confidence, into a separate bothy, where they might have leisure for full converse over a cup of wine.

"To what happy accident am I to attribute our meeting thus in Knoidart?" demanded Glengarry.

"If I had not chanced thus to meet you here," said MacLeod, "I should have gone on to Inver-

garry Castle, as I originally intended. But it is well that I am saved so long a journey."

"Nay, by all that is friendly, that is not well said of you, MacLeod," said Glengarry. "But I shall not be baulked of your visit. We shall break up hence, and set forward thither before to-morrow's dawn. If there be deer on my hills—fish in my streams—steers in my pastures—or wine in my castle-vaults, thou shalt be feasted like a prince as thou art."

"That may not be," said MacLeod, "for this is no time for you to devote to friendship and feasting. Thou knowest not that the object of this voyage of mine was no other than to warn thee of certain wicked plots that are about to be brought to bear against thee."

"What!—some evil machinations of the accursed Kintail, I warrant me," said Glengarry.

"Thou hast guessed, and guessed rightly too," replied MacLeod.

"Cowardly villain that he is!" cried Glengarry, "what has he done?"

"Thou knowest that he is in high favour at court," said MacLeod. "They even talk now of his being made an Earl. But be that as it may,

he hath somehow or other acquired the means of using the king's ear. And foully doth he misuse it, by pouring poison into it to farther his own ambitious and avaricious views, to the injury of the innocent."

"'Tis like the cold-hearted knave," said Glengarry. "But what I pray thee hath he said of me?"

"I know not what he may have said of thee," answered MacLeod, "but I know that he must have sorely misreported thee, seeing that through certain channels he hath persuaded his Majesty to arm him with letters of fire and sword and outlawry against thee."

"What said'st thou?" cried Glengarry, choking with his rising anger; "did I hear thee aright? Letters of outlawry, and of fire and sword, put into the hands of MacKenzie of Kintail, to be executed against *me*!—Oh, impossible!"

"What I tell thee is too true," said MacLeod.

"The dastard dare not use them!" cried Glengarry, grinding his teeth from the violence of his rage.

"Backed by the king, as he now is, he may dare do anything," said MacLeod.

"I defy him though he be backed by the king," cried Glengarry in a fury; "aye, and though both were backed by the black monarch of hell! God forgive me for coupling the name of a sovereign whom I would fain love and honour, if he would but let me, with those of MacKenzie of Kintail, and that devil whom he delights to serve."

"Moderate your passion, Glengarry," said MacLeod, "and listen to me quietly, until I put thee in possession of all that is brewing against thee."

"I am calm," said Glengarry.

"It is my duty as a friend of thine to tell thee, then," said MacLeod, "that a meeting is summoned for three days hence at the castle of Eilean Donan, of all those whom Kintail chooses to call the king's friends in these north-western parts, who are called together for the ostensible purpose of giving him counsel how best to put in force those letters against thee, which he affects to be deeply grieved to have been charged with."

"Hypocritical villain!" cried Glengarry.

"I am one of those friends of the king who are thus summoned," said MacLeod, "and my present object was to prove to thee, that although I may be so ranked, I am not the less a friend of thine.

I wished to make thee fully aware of the whole state of matters, before I go to Eilean Donan to swell, as in regard to my own safety I must needs do, that majority which he looks for to strengthen his hands against thee."

"Thou hast proved thyself a friend indeed," said Glengarry, after ruminating a few seconds. "Thou hast proved thyself to be that old and steady friend of mine which I always have believed, and ever will believe thee to be. And now it is my turn to ask thee, whether thou hast ever found me in one instance to fail thee?"

"Thou hast never failed me, Glengarry," said MacLeod, "and I trust our clans shall be ever linked together like one bundle of rods."

"Aye!" said Glengarry, with a bitter laugh, "a bundle of rods which I trust may one day be well employed in scourging this pitiful tyrant of the north-west. I love thee too much to demand thine open aid at present. But haply thou mayest well enough find some excuse for not going to this meeting thou speakest of. An excuse, mark me, to be sent after the day is past. Thou canst be grievously ill, or anything may serve as an apology, if an apology should be required; for I have friends at

court too, and I may yet find the means so to bring things into proper joint, as to render apologies more necessary from Kintail than from us. All that I ask of thee then is, that you may not appear at this nefarious assemblage at Eilean Donan."

"MacDonell," replied MacLeod, "I know the risk I run, but I am ready to incur any risk for so old a friend as thou art, especially in a case where the securing aid in arms rather than in council, is so evidently the object of Kintail in calling us together. Say no more then; we shall weigh hence for Dunvegan by to-morrow's dawn, and be assured nothing shall drag me thence, to be marshalled against thee in any way."

"Thank thee—thank thee!" said Glengarry, cordially shaking MacLeod by the hand. "This is no more than I expected of thy generosity and good faith. Thy kind and friendly information shall not be thrown away upon me. I shall for Invergarry Castle by to-morrow morning's sunrise. But thou shalt hear from me without fail. And if thy little finger be but brought into jeopardy, thou shall have my neck to answer for it."

This important conversation between the two chiefs being now ended, they gave themselves up

to the enjoyment of that good fellowship and revelry which arose between their two clans. Small was that portion of the time subjected to the rule of night which was by them devoted to slumber, and soon were they both astir each to pursue his separate way; and, as the rising sun was glancing on the arms of Glengarry and his people as they wound inland over the muirland hills, they looked back towards Loch Hourn, and beheld the gallies of MacLeod winging their way for Sky, under a favouring land breeze, that seemed to have been begotten by the genial beams of morning, which then poured a flood of brilliant light after them as they flew over the trembling surface of the waters.

The tide was fully up around the little island, which gives name to the castle of Eilean Donan, and the ferry-boat was moored on the landward side of the strait, when the shades of night began to descend upon it, and upon the whole of the surrounding scenery, on the evening of that day which was fixed for the gathering that Lord Kintail had summoned.

"A plague take this MacLeod," said the boatman in Gaelic, to his assistant, as they sat glued to their benches, listening with envy to the sounds

of mirth that came to their ears from within the castle walls. "A plague upon this MacLeod, who keeps us waiting here in the cold, when we might be warming our toes at a blazing fire, and cherishing our noses with a goodly flaggon of ale!"

"A plague upon him, with all my heart," echoed the other man. "Is it for him alone that we are condemned to tarry here?"

"Aye, Donald," said the master, "MacLeod is the only man awanting, it seems; and, sure enough, I think there be plenty without him. Hast thou ever before seen such an inpouring of eagles' wings into the castle of Eilean Donan? There is surely something a-brewing."

"Whatever may be brewing, Master Duncan, we seem to have but little hope of drinking of it," said the man, laughing heartily at his own joke.

"Faith, Master Donald, they may be brewing some *browst*, which neither you nor I would be very eager to drink," replied the master, "I would rather be turning up a creaming cup of the castle ale, than have aught to do with any such liquor. But hold, heard ye not the tread of men? Come, loose the rope, and to yoar oars. That will be MacLeod at last.—Who comes there?"

cried he, as he dimly perceived a small party of men approaching the spot where the boat lay.

"MacLeod!" cried a voice in reply, and immediately a tall and bulky figure, completely enveloped in an ample plaid advanced, and after having given some secret directions to his followers, to which the impatient boatmen neither cared nor tried to listen, he stepped solemnly and silently alone into the boat, and was speedily rowed across.

The hall of Eilean Donan was that night crowded beyond all former precedent. The feast was already over, and Lord Kintail was then presiding over the long board, where flowing goblets were circulating among the numerous guests, who were all his friends or allies, or who at least feared to declare themselves to be otherwise. But fully aware of the uncertain materials of which this great assemblage was composed, the chief of the MacKenzies had most prudently intermingled the stoutest and bravest individuals of his own clan among these strangers; and, as was customary in these rude times, each man sat with his drawn dirk sticking upright in the board before him, ready for immediate use, in case of its services being required; and this precaution was the more naturally adopt-

ed upon the present occasion, because every one at that table was jealous and doubtful of those sitting to right and left of him.

On a sudden the door of the hall was thrown open, and a huge man strode slowly and erectly into the middle of it. He was muffled up in a large dark plaid, of some nameless tartan; and it was so folded over the under part of his face, as completely to conceal it; whilst the upper part of his features was shrouded by the extreme breadth of the bonnet he wore. His appearance produced a sudden lull in the loud talk that was then arising from every mouth, the din of which had been making the vaulted roof to ring again. The name of "MacLeod" ran in whispers around, and Lord Kintail himself having for a moment taken up the notion that had at first so generally seized the company, he signed to his seneschal to usher the stranger towards the upper end of the table where he himself sat, and where a vacant chair on his right hand had been left for the chief of Dunvegan.

The stranger obeyed the invitation indeed; but he sat not down. He stood erect and motionless for a moment, with all eyes fixed upon him.

"MacLeod!" said the Lord Kintail, half-rising

to acknowledge his presence by a bow. "Thou art late. We tarried for thee till our stomachs overmatched our courtesy. But stay, am I right? art thou MacLeod or not? Come, if thou art MacLeod, why standest thou with thy face concealed? Unfold thyself and be seated; for there are none but friends here."

"I am not MacLeod!" said the stranger, speaking distinctly and deliberately, but in a hollow tone, from within the folds of his plaid.

"Who art thou, then, in God's name?" demanded Kintail, with some degree of confusion of manner.

"I am an outlawed MacDonell," replied the stranger.

"A MacDonell!" cried Kintail, with manifest agitation. "What wouldst thou under this roof?"

"I am come to throw myself on thy good faith, Lord Kintail, with the hope that thou mayest be the means of procuring a reversal of the hard sentence which hath been so unjustly passed upon me and my clan."

"I must first know more of thee," said Kintail. "I can give no promise until I know who thou art."

"I said I was a MacDonell," replied the other.

"That is a wide name," said Kintail. "Heaven knows, that for the peace of the earth, it holds too many that bear that name."

"That may be as men may think," said the stranger, with greater quickness of articulation.

"What MacDonell art thou, then?" demanded Kintail? "Pray, unmuffle thy face."

"One MacDonell is like another," said the stranger carelessly.

"That answer will not serve me," said Kintail. "I must see thy face. And methinks it is a bad sign of thee, that thou shouldst be ashamed to show it."

"Ashamed!" said the stranger, with emphasis; —and then, as if commanding himself,—"In times of feud like these," added he, after a pause, "thou canst not ask me to uncover my face before so promiscuous a company as this, where, for aught I know, I may have some sworn and deadly personal enemies, who may seek to do me wrong. But give me thy solemn pledge, Lord Kintail, that I shall suffer no skaith, and then thou *shalt* see my face."

"I swear to thee before this goodly assemblage,"

said Kintail, "that whoever thou mayest be, or whatever enemies of thine may be amongst us, thou shalt be skaithless. Nay, more; for thy brave bearing, thou shalt have free assoilzieing from outlawry and all other penalties, be thou whom thou mayest, with one exception alone."

"Whom dost thou except?" demanded the stranger, eagerly advancing his body, but without unveiling his face.

"Glengarry himself," said Lord Kintail.

"By all that is good, Glengarry may well be a proud man, by being so distinguished," said the stranger, with great energy both of voice and of action. And then, after a short pause, he made one bold step forward, and throwing wide his plaid, and standing openly confessed before them all, he exclaimed in a voice like thunder,—"*I am Glengarry!*"

There was one moment of fearful silence during which all eyes were turned upon the chief of the MacDonells, with the fixed stare of people who were utterly confounded. Then was every dirk plucked from the board by the right hand of its owner, and the clash which was thus made among the beakers and flaggons was terrific; and the sa-

vage looks which each man darted upon his neighbour, in his apprehension of treachery, where each almost fancied that the saving of his own life might depend on the quick dispatching of him who sat next to him, presented a spectacle which might have frozen the blood of the stoutest heart that witnessed it. But ere a stroke was struck, or a single man could leave his place, Glengarry sprang on Kintail with the swiftness of a falcon on its quarry; and ere he could arm himself, he seized his victim with the vice-like gripe of his left hand, and pinned him motionless into his chair, whilst the dirk which he had concealed under his plaid, now gleamed in his right hand, with its point within an inch of the MacKenzie's throat.

"Strike away, gentlemen," said Glengarry, calmly; "but if that be your game, I have the first cock!"

The MacKenzies had all risen, it is true. Nay, some of them had even moved a step forward in defence of their chief. But they marked the gigantic figure of Glengarry; and seeing that the iron strength he possessed gave him as much power over Lord Kintail as an ordinary man has over a mere child, and that any movement on their part

must instantly seal his doom, each man of them stepped back and paused, and an awful and motionless silence oncemore reigned for some moments throughout the hall.

"Let any man but stir a finger!" said Glengarry in a calm, slow, yet tremendous voice, "and the fountain of Lord Kintail's life's blood shall spout forth, till it replenish the goblet of him who sits in the lowest seat at this board! Let not a finger be stirred, and Kintail shall be skaithless."

"What wouldest thou with me, MacDonell?" demanded Kintail, with half-choked utterance, that gave sufficient evidence of the rudeness of that gripe by which his throat was held.

"Thou hast gotten letters of outlawry and of fire and sword against me and against my clan," said Glengarry.

"I have," said Kintail. "They were sent me because of thy rescue of certain men of the MacCraws, declared rebels to the king."

"I ask not how or whence thou hadst them," said Glengarry. "But I would have them instantly produced."

"How shall I produce them, when thou wilt not suffer me nor any one to move?" said Kintail.

"Let thy chaplain there—that unarmed man of peace—let him produce them," said Glengarry.

"Go then, good Colin," said Kintail to the chaplain, "go to yonder cabinet, thou knowest where they lie. Bring them hither."

"This is well!" said Glengarry, clutching the parchments with his armed hand from the trembling ecclesiastic, and thrusting them hastily into his bosom. "So far this is well. Now sit thee down, reverend sir, and forthwith write out a letter from thy lord to the king, fully clearing me and mine in the eyes of his Majesty from all blame, and setting forth in true colours my own loyalty and that of my brave clan. Most cruelly have we been belied, for before these gentlemen I do here swear, that as God shall be my judge, he hath nowhere more faithful subjects."

"Use thy pen as he dictates," said Kintail, "for if he speaks thus, I will freely own he hath been wronged in the false rumours which have been conveyed to me, and through me to his Majesty."

"'Tis honest at least in thee to say so much, Lord Kintail," said Glengarry, "and since thou dost grant me this, thine amanuensis here may as well write me out a short deed pledging thee to

the restitution of those lands of mine which were taken from me, by the king's order, on former false statements of delinquency. And be expeditious, dost thou hear, lest thy good lord here may suffer too long from the inconvenience of this awkward posture in which thou art thyself detaining him by thy slow and inexpert clerkship."

"Write as thou art bid! and as expeditiously as may be," said Kintail, sincerely coinciding with Glengarry's last recommendation. Accordingly, the papers were made out exactly as he desired—signed by Kintail—and then placed in the capacious bosom of the MacDonell chief.

"All this is so far well," said Glengarry. "Now swear me solemnly that I shall be permitted to return home without molestation, and that thou wilt faithfully, and truly, and honestly observe all these thine engagements."

"I swear!" said Kintail, "I solemnly swear that thou shall pass hence and return into thine own country, without a hair of thy head being hurt; and I shall truly and faithfully observe every thing I have promised, whether in writing or otherwise."

"Then," said Glengarry, quietly relinquishing

his grasp—sheathing his dirk—and coolly seating himself at the board as if nothing had happened; "then let us have one friendly cup ere we part,—I would pledge to thy health and to thy rooftree, my Lord Kintail!" and, saying so, he filled a large goblet of wine and drained it to the bottom, turning it up when he had finished, to show that he had done fair justice to the toast.

"Glengarry!" said Kintail, "thou shalt not find me behind thee in courtesy. Thine to be sure hath been in certain respects somewhat of the roughest to-night, and I must own," continued he chafing his throat, "that a cup of wine never could come to me more desirably than at this moment, so I now drink to thee as a friend, for enemies though we have ever been, thy gallant courage has won my full applause."

"And I repeat the pledge, and in the same friendly guise, Kintail," said Glengarry taking him by the hand, and squeezing it till this demonstration of his new-born friendship became almost as inconvenient to the chief of the MacKenzies, as the effects of his ancient enmity had so lately been. "And now I must bid you all God speed in a parting draught,—*Slainte!*"

"One cup more, Glengarry, to *Deoch-an-dor-rus!*" said Kintail.

"With all my heart," said Glengarry, and this last pledge was a deep one. Again he squeezed Kintail's hand, till he made the tears come into his eyes. "Be assured," said he, "thy letter to the King is in safe hands, my Lord Kintail, for I shall see it delivered myself."

"Lights and an escort there for Glengarry!" cried Lord Kintail; and the bold chief of the Mac-Donells, bowing courteously around him to all that were assembled in the hall, left them full of wonder at his hardihood, whilst he was marshalled with all due ceremonial and honour to the boat, and ferried across to his impatient people. He found that his little knot of MacDonells, with Alaister More at their head, had been kept so long in a state of anxiety, and they had begun to doubt and to fear so much for his safety, that they were on the very eve of resolving to endeavour to break into the castle, that they might ascertain what had befallen him, or to die in the attempt.

"My horse, Alaister!" cried Glengarry, as soon as his foot had touched the shore; and throwing himself into the saddle, he let no grass grow at his

heels till he reached the capital, and was presented at court, where he speedily re-established himself in the good opinion of his sovereign.

LONG YARNS.

CLIFFORD, (*yawning*).—Now, Mr. MacPherson, your story comes next, and if it is but of brevity, as reasonable as that which we have now heard,—aw!—aw—I think,—aw-ah-ahaw!—that in justice to you, we are bound to hear it ere we go to bed—a—aw-aw.

DOMINIE.—I cannot positively say what my story might measure out to in the hands of ane able story-teller. Some clever chield like Homer, or Virgil, or Sir Walter Scott, for example, any one of whom could spin you a thread as if they were working it off by the hundred ells, with that machine once vurra much used by the Highland wives, called the *muckle wheel*. But, plain man

as I am, you can never expeck me to tell anything but the bare facks. Yet I must not let you yemagine, gentlemen, that there is any fack at all in the foolish fairy story I am now going to tell you.

CLIFFORD.—Why, Mr. MacPherson,—aw—aw—ha! if I have any of my logic left in me at all, I think I can prove that *de facto* you have no story to tell. As thus:—

You tell nothing but *facks*,
In your story there is no *fack*,
Therefore you have nothing to tell.

Quoad erat demonstrandum. Ergo, as a corollary I think we had better—aw—aw—a—go to bed.

GRANT.—Very ingeniously made out, Clifford. But we know from experience, that logic and common sense are not always equal to the same thing, and therefore they are not always equal to one another. So, to cut the argument short, I now move that Mr. MacPherson do forthwith begin his story.

AUTHOR.—I second the motion.

CLIFFORD.—Well, I shall—aw, aw—light an-

other cigar, and if he does not finish in the smoking of it, I for one shall bowl off to bed.

GRANT.—Come then, Mr. MacPherson, pray take the start of him.

THE LEGEND OF THE BUILDING OF BALLINDALLOCH.

As you go down the avenue leading from the bridge to the present house of Ballindalloch, gentlemen, you cross a small rivulet that rushes headlong with a cheerful sound from the wooded banks rising on your right hand, the which, after finding its way under the road through what is commonly called a *cundy* bridge, throws itself over the rocks directly into the pellucid stream of the Aven, that accompanies you on your left. If you should chance to go down that way, and if you should be tempted to trace that little rill upwards through the wild shrubbery, and among the tangled roots of the venerable oaks and other trees which shoot up every where in fantastic shapes from its sides, and by throwing their outstretched arms across its

bed here and there, produce a pleasing contrast of chequered light and shade, you will find many a nook amid its mazes, which a fanciful yemagination might set apart as a haunt befitting those frisking creatures of the poet's brain Oberon and Titania, and where the sly tricks and *pawky* gambols of Puck and the fairy folk might well be played. I think, indeed, that I could almost venture to assert, that no one truly filled with what may be termed the romance of poetry, could well pass a few hours' vigil in the thick retirement of that lovely and sequestered grove, with the full moon piercing through the openings in the canopy of foliage, and shining directly down the little ravine where that musical rill flows, its beams converting the rushing waters into silver, and the dewdrops of every leaf, flower, or blade of grass on its banks into diamonds, without looking to come pop upon some tiny fairy palace, or to be charmed by some witching sight or sound, that, for the time at least, may make him forget that he is a mortal. This opinion I venture to pronounce on the mere internal yevidence afforded by the spot itself, as well as by the recollections of my own feelings when I chanced to wander up the place under similar cir-

cumstances, with this simple addition, to be sure, that I had been at a wedding that night, and had consequently a small drop of toddy in my head. But be that as it may, the vulgar supposition that it is inhabited by supernatural beings is borne out by the corroborative testimony of very ancient tradition. From time immemorial it has been called *the Castle Stripe*, and the origin of this name is linked with some old foundations which are still to be seen on the summit of the bank above, the legendary history of which I am now going to tell you.

It is believed that several centuries have passed away since the Laird of Ballindalloch proposed to build himself a castle or peel tower for his more secure abode in times when the prevalence of private feuds required strength of position and solidity of structure; and having, doubtless, first and foremost sat down like a sensible man to count the probable cost of his contemplated edifice, he next, with especial prudence, set about considering where he should find the best site to erect it on; and after a careful examination of his domains, he at last fixed on the very spot now occupied by those old foundations I spake of. This place pos-

sessed many advantages in his eyes, for, whilst it was itself overlooked by nothing, it not only commanded a pleasant prospect over all the haughs and low grounds of his own property, but it also enjoyed a view of the whole of the lands of Tulloch-Carron, lying on the opposite side of the Aven; and between that river and the Spey, above their point of junction, and this the goodman considered a thing of very great importance at a time when that property was in the hands of another laird, with whom, if there was not then a quarrel, yet nobody could say how soon a quarrel might arise.

This very weighty matter of consideration being thus settled in his own mind, he began his operations with vigour. Numerous bodies of masons and labourers were applied to the work. In a few days the foundations were dug and laid, and several courses of the masonry appeared above ground, and the undertaking seemed to be going on in the most prosperous manner, and perfectly to the laird's satisfaction.

But what was the astonishment of the workmen one morning, when, on returning by sunrise to their labour, they discovered that the whole of the new-

ly built walls had disappeared, aye, down to the vurra level of the ground! The poor fellows, as you may guess, were terrified beyond measure. Fain would they have altogether desisted from a work over which, it was perfectly plain, that if some powerful enemy had not the control, some strange and mysterious fatality must certainly hang. But in those days lairds were not men to whom masons, or simple delvers of the ground could dare to say nay. He of whom I am now telling you was determined to have his own way, and to proceed, in spite of what had occurred, and in defiance of what might occur; and having sent round and summoned a great many more workmen in addition to those already employed, he set them to the work with redoubled vigilance, and ere the sun of another day went down, he had raised the walls very nearly to the height which they had reached the previous evening before their most unaccountable disappearance.

But no sooner had the light of a new morning dawned, than it was discovered that the whole work had again disappeared down to the level of the ground. The people were frightened out of their senses. They hardly dared to go near the

spot. But the terrors which the very name of the laird carried with it, swallowed up all their other terrors, as the serpent into which the rod of Moses was converted, swallowed up all those that sprang from the rods of the magicians of Egypp; and as the laird only became so much the more obstinate from all these mysterious thwartings which he met with, the poor people were obliged to tremble in secret, and immediately to obey his will. The whole country was scoured, and the number of workmen was again very much increased, so that what by cuffing and what by coaxing (means which I find it vurra beneficial to employ by turns to stimulate my own scholars to their tasks), nearly double the usual quantum of work was done before night. But, alas! the next morning's dawn proved that the building of this Peel-tower of Ballindalloch continued to be like unto the endless weaving of the web of Penelope, for each succeeding morning saw the work of the previous day annihilated by means which no human being could possibly divine.

"What *can* be the meaning of all this?" said the laird to Ian Grant, his faithful henchman, vexed out of all patience as he was at last by this

most provoking and perplexing affair. "Who *can* be the author of all this mischief?"

"Troth I cannot say, sir," replied Ian. "The loons at the work think that it is some spite taken up against us by the *good people*."*

"Good people!" cried the laird in a rage. "What mean you by good people? More likely fiends, I wot."

"For the love of the Virgin use better terms. Ballindalloch," replied Ian. "Who knows what ears may be listening to us unseen."

"If I did not know thee to be as brave a fellow as ever handled a broadsword, I would say shame on thee, Ian, for a coward!" cried the laird. "Hark, ye! I would not wilfully anger the *good people* more than thou wouldst do. But I cannot help thinking that some bad people—some of my unfriends—some secret enemies of mine, of mortal mould, must have, some how or other, contrived, by devilish arts, to do me all these ill turns."

"It will be easy to find that out, sir," said Ian, "we have only to plant a good guard all night on the works."

* *Good people*, the propitiatory name usually given by the superstitious peasants to the fairies.

"That was exactly what I was thinking of, Ian," said the laird, "and I was a fool not to have thought of it before. Set the masons to their task again, then, without delay, and see that they be not idle, and take care to have a night-watch ready to mount over the work the moment the sun goes to bed. I'll warrant me we shall find out the scoundrels, or if we do not, we shall at least have the satisfaction of putting a stop to their devilish amusement."

None of Ballindalloch's people, however brave, were very much enamoured of any such duty, however honourable it might have been considered. But his orders were too imperative to be disobeyed, and so some dozen or twain of stout handlers of the old broad-bladed Scottish spear were planted as sentinels to patrol around the walls during the night. These gallant fellows took care to carry with them some cordials to keep their spirits up, and by a liberal use of them, the first two or three dreary hours of darkness passed off with tolerable tranquillity and comfort, and as time wore on, and their courage waxed stronger and stronger, they began to be of the laird's opinion, that however wonderful previous events had appeared to

the there had in reality been nothing supernatural in them; and, moreover, whatever might be the nature of the enemy, they were by no means disposed to venture to molest the brave defenders of the new walls.

Full of these convictions, their contempt of all earthly foes increased, as their dread of unearthly enemies subsided; and as there was an ancient and wide-spreading oak tree, growing within about forty or fifty paces of the walls, they thought that they might as well retire beneath the shelter of its shade, as some protection from the descending damps. This they were the more readily induced to do, seeing that from thence they could quite easily observe the approach of any suspicious people who might appear. Nay, they even judged that the cowardly enemy who might otherwise have been scared by observing so stout an armed band about the walls, might now be encouraged to shew themselves by their temporary concealment.

"Come away now, Duncan man," said one of these heroes to a comrade, after they had drawn themselves together into a jovial knot, close to the huge trunk of the oak. "Come away, man, with your flask. I'm wondering much whether the

juice that is in its body be of the same mettlesome browst, as that which came with so heart-stirring a smack out of the vitals of Tom's leathern bottle."

"Rest its departed spirit, Charly! it was real comfortable and courage-giving stuff," said another.

"By Saint Peter, but that's no worse!" said Charly, tasting it and smacking his lips, "Hah! it went to my very heart's core. Such liquor as this would make a man face the devil."

"Fie! let us not talk of such a person," said Tom. "I hope it is enow, if its potency, amounteth even so high, as to make us do our duty against men like ourselves."

"Men like ourselves!" cried Charly. "I trow such like as ourselves are not to be furnished from the banks of either Aven or Spey,—aye, or from those of any other river or stream that I wot of. Give me another tug of thy most virtuous flask there, Duncan. Hah!—I say again that the power of clergy and holy water is nothing to this. It would stir a man up to lay the very devil himself. What sayest thou and thy red nose, old Archy Dhu."

"I say that I think thou art speaking some-

what unadvisedly," replied Archy, stretching out his hand at the same time, and taking the flask from Charly, as he was about to apply it to his lips for the third time in succession.

" Stay thy hand, man. Methinks it is my turn to drink."

" Silence!" said one who had command over them. " Can ye not moderate your voices, and speak more under breath? Your gabbling will spoil all."

" Master Donald Bane hath good reason with him, gentlemen," said Archibald Dhu, in a subdued tone. " For my part, I shall be silent;" and well might he say so, seeing that at that moment he turned aside to hold long and sweet converse with the flask.

" I tell ye, we must be quiet as mice," said Master Donald. " Even our half-whispers might be heard by any one stealing towards the walls, amidst the unbroken stillness of this night."

The night was indeed still as the grave. Not a leaf was stirring. Even the drowsy hum of the beetle was hushed, and no sound reached their ears but the tinkling music of the tiny rill that ran through the little runnel near them, in its way to-

wards the ravine in the bank, and the soft murmur of the stream of the Aven, coming muffled through the foliage from below; when, on a sudden, a mighty rush of wind was heard to arise from the distant top of Ben-Rinnes, which terribly grew in strength as it came rapidly sweeping directly towards them. So awfully terrific was the howl of this whirlwind, that the very hairs of the heads of even the boldest of these hardy spearmen stood stiff and erect, as if they would have lifted up their iron skull-caps. Every fibre of their bodies quivered, so that the very links of their shirts of mail jingled together, and *Aves* and *Paternosters* came not only from the mouths of such brave boasters as Charly, but they were uttered right glibly by many a bold bearded lip to which, I warrant me, they had been long strangers. On came the furious blast. The sturdy oak under which they had taken shelter, beat every man of them to the ground by the mere bending of its bole and the writhing of its boughs and branches. Wild shrieks were heard in the air amid the yelling of the tempest, and a quick discharge of repeated plunges in the Aven below, announced to them that some heavy materials had been thrown into

it. Again, the whirlwind swept instantaneously onwards; and as it was dying away among the mountains to the north of the Spey, an unearthly laugh, loud as thunder, was heard over their heads.

No sooner had this appalling peal of laughter ceased, than all was again calm and still as death. The great oak under which the discomfited men of the watch lay, heaped one on another, immediately recovered its natural position. But fear had fallen so heavily on these bruised and prostrate men-at-arms, that they dared not even to lift their bodies to the upright position; but creeping together around the root of the tree, they lay quivering and shaking with dread, their teeth chattering together in their heads like handfulls of *chucky* stones, till the sun arose to put some little courage into them with his cheering rays. Then it was that they discovered, to their horror and dismay, that the whole work done by the masons during the preceding day at the new building, had been as completely razed and obliterated as it had ever been upon any of the previous nights. You may believe, gentlemen, that it required some courage to inform their stern master of the result of their

night's watch; and with one consent they resolved that Ian Grant, the laird's henchman, should be first informed; and he was earnestly besought to be their vehicle of communication.

"Psha!" cried the laird impatiently, when the news reached him. "I cannot believe a word of this, Ian. The careless caitiffs have trumped up this story as an apology for their own negligence in keeping a loose watch. I'll have every mother's babe of them hanged. A howling tempest and an elrich laugh, saidst thou? Ha! ha! ha! Well indeed might these wicked unfriends of mine, who have so outwitted these lazy rascals, laugh till their sides ached, at the continued success of their own mischief. I'll warrant it has been some of Tulloch Carron's people; and if my fellows had been worth the salt that they devour at my expense, assuredly we might have had the culprits swinging on the gallows-tree by this time. So our men may e'en swing there in their stead."

"If Tulloch Carron's people have done these pranks, they must be bolder and cleverer men than I take them for," said Ian calmly. "But before we set these poor fellows of ours a-dancing upon nothing, with the gallows-tree for their part-

ner, methinks we may as well take a peep into the stream of the Aven, where the wonderful clearness of the water will shew a pebble at the depth of twenty feet. Certain it is, that there came a strange and furious blast over these valleys last night; and there may be no harm in just looking into the Aven, to see if any of the stones of the work be lying at the bottom."

"There can be no harm in that," said the laird, "so let us go there directly."

They went accordingly; and to the great surprise of both master and man, they saw distinctly that the bed of the river was covered over with the new hammer-dressed stones; and yet, on examining the high banks above, and the trees and bushes that grew on them, not a trace appeared to indicate that human exertions had been employed to transport them downwards thither from the site of the new building. The laird and his attendant were filled with wonder. Yet still he was not satisfied that his conjectures had been altogether wrong.

"If it has been Tulloch Carron's people," said he, doubtingly, "they must have enlisted the devil himself as their ally. But let them have whom

they may to aid them, I am resolved I shall unravel this mystery, cost what it will. I'll watch this night in person."

"I doubt it will be but a tempting of powers against which mortal man can do but little," said Ian. "But come what come may, I'll watch with thee, Ballindalloch."

"Then haste thee, Ian, and set the workmen to their labour again with all their might," said the laird, "and let the masons raise the building as high as they possibly can from the ground before night; and thou and I shall see whether we shall not keep the stones from flying off through the air like a flight of swallows."

The anxious laird remained all day at the work himself; and as you know, gentlemen, that the master's eye maketh the horse fat, so hath it also a strange power of giving double progress to all matters of labour that it looketh upon. The result was, that when the masons left off in the evening, the building was found to have risen higher than it had ever done before. When night came, the same watch was again set about the walls; for the laird wished for an opportunity of personally convicting the men of culpable careless-

ness and neglect of duty. To make all sure, he and his henchman took post on the embryo peel tower itself.

The air was still, and the sky clear and beautiful, as upon the previous night, and armed with their lances, Ballindalloch and his man Ian walked their rounds with alert steps, throwing their eyes sharply around them in all directions, anxiously bent on detecting any thing that might appear like the semblance of treachery. The earlier hours, however, passed without disturbance; and the confidence of the laird and Ian increased, just as that of the men of the guard diminished, when the hour began to approach at which the entertainments of the previous night had commenced. As this hour drew near, their stolen applications to their cordial flasks became more frequent; but sup after sup went down; and so far from their courage being thereby stirred up, they seemed to be just so much the more fear-stricken every drop they swallowed. They moved about like a parcel of timid hares, with their ears pricked up, ready to drink in the first note of intimation of the expected danger. A bull feeding in the broad pastures stretch-

ing between them and the base of Ben Rinnes, bellowed at a distance.

"Holy Mother, there it comes!" cried Charly. In an instant that hero and all the other heroes fled like roe-deer, utterly regardless of the volley of threats and imprecations which the enraged laird discharged after them, like a hail-storm, as they retreated, their ears being rendered deaf to them by the terror which bewildered their brains; and in the twinkling of an eye not a man of them was to be seen.

"Cowards!" exclaimed the laird, after they were all gone. "To run away at the roaring of a bull!" The braying of an ass would have done as much. Of such stuff, I warrant me, was that whirlwind of last night composed, of which they made out so terrible a story."

"What could make the fellows so feared?" said Ian. "I have seen them stand firm in many a hard fought and bloody field. Strange, that they should run at the routing of a bull."

"And so the villains have left you and me alone, to meet whatever number of arms of flesh may be pleased to come against us! Well, be it so, Ian.

I flinch not. I am resolved to find out this mystery, come what may of it. Ian, you have stood by me singly ere now; and I trust you will stand by me again; for I am determined that nothing mortal shall move me hence till morning dawns."

"Whatever you do, Ballindalloch," replied his faithful henchman, "it shall never be said that Ian Grant abandoned his master. I will"—

"Jesu Maria! what sound is that?" exclaimed the laird, suddenly interrupting him, and starting into an attitude of awe and dread.

And no marvel that he did so; for the wail of the rising whirlwind now came rushing upon them from the distant summit of Ben Rinnes. In an instant its roar was as if a tempestuous ocean had been rolling its gigantic billows over the mountain top; and on it swept so rapidly, as to give them no farther time for colloquy. A lurid glare of light shot across the sky from south to north. Shrieks,—fearful shrieks,—shrieks such as the mountain itself might have uttered, had it been an animated being, mingled with the blast. It was already upon them, and in one moment both master and man were whirled off through the air and over the bank, where they were tossed, one over

the other, confounded and bruised, into the thickest part of a large and wide spreading holly bush; and whilst they stuck there, jammed in among the boughs, and altogether unable to extricate themselves, they heard the huge granite stones, which had been that day employed in the work, whizzing through the air over their heads, as if they had been projected from one of those engines which that warlike people, the ancient Romans, called a balista or catapult; and ever and anon they heard them plunged into the river below, with a repetition of deep hollow sounds, resembling the discharge of great guns. The tempest swept off towards the north, as it had done on the previous night; and a laugh, that was like the laugh of a voice of thunder, seemed to them to re-echo from the distant hills, and made the very blood freeze in their veins. But what still more appalled them, this tremendous laugh was followed by a yet more tremendous voice, as if the mountain had spoken. It filled the whole of the double valley of the Aven and the Spey, and it repeated three times successively this whimsical command.

"Build in the Cow-haugh!—Build in the Cow-haugh!—Build in the Cow-haugh!"—and again

all nature returned to its former state of stillness and of silence.

"Saint Mary help me!" cried Ian from his position, high up in the holly bush where he hung, doubled up over the fork of two boughs, with his head and his heels hanging down together like an old worsted stocking. "Saint Mary help me!—where am I?—and where is the laird?"

"Holy St. Peter!" cried the laird, from some few feet below him, "I rejoice to hear thy voice, Ian. Verily, I thought that the hurricane which these hellish—no—I mean these *good people* raised, had swept all mortals but myself from the face of this earth."

"I praise the Virgin that thou art still to the fore, Ballindalloch," said Ian. "In what sort of plight art thou, I pray thee?"

"In very sorry plight, truly," said the laird,—sorely bruised and tightly and painfully jammed into the cleft of the tree, with my nose and my toes more closely associated together than they have ever been before, since my first entrance into this weary world. Canst thou not aid me, Ian?"

"Would that I could aid thee, Ballindalloch," said Ian mournfully; "but thou must e'en take

the will for the deed. I am hanging here over a bough, like a piece of sheep's tripe, without an atom of *fushon** in me, and confined, moreover, by as many cross-branches as would cage in a blackbird. I fear there is no hope for us till day-light."

And in good sooth there they stuck maundering in a maze of speculation for the rest of the night.

When the morning sun had again restored sufficient courage to the men of the watch, curiosity led them to return to ascertain how things stood about the site of the building which they had so precipitately abandoned. They were horror-struck to observe, that in addition to the utter obliteration of the whole of the previous day's work, the laird himself, and his henchman Ian Grant, had disappeared. At first they most naturally supposed that they had both been swept away at once with the walls of the new building on which they stood, and that they could never hope to see them again, more than they could expect to see the stones of the walls that had been so miraculously whirled away. But piteous groans were heard arising from the bank below them; and on searching farther, Ballindalloch and his man Ian were

* Strength.

discovered and released from their painful bastile. The poor men-at-arms who had formed the watch were mightily pleased to observe, that the laird's temper was most surprisingly cooled by his night's repose in the holly bush. I need not tell you that he spoke no more of hanging them. You will naturally yemagine, too, that he no longer persevered in pressing the erection of the ill-starred keep tower on the proud spot he had chosen for it, but that he implicitly followed the dread and mysterious order he had received to

"Build in the Cow-haugh!"

He did, in fact, soon afterwards commence building the present Castle of Ballindalloch, in that beautiful haugh which stretched between the Aven and the Spey, below their junction, which then went by the name of the Cow-haugh; and the building was allowed to proceed to its conclusion without the smallest interruption.

Such is the legend I promised you, gentlemen; and however absurd it may be, I look upon it as curious; for it no doubt covers some real piece of more rational history, regarding the cause of the abandonment of those old foundations which has now degenerated into this wild but poetical fable.

SOMNOSALMONIA.

CLIFFORD (*asleep.*)—Ha! ha! ha!—There he comes! What a noble fish! Didn't I tell you I would do for him? Ha! there—there now—I shall land him beautifully at last.

AUTHOR.—Why, he's asleep, Grant; give him a good shake, will you.

CLIFFORD (*half-awaking.*)—Oh! oh! oh! what are you at? Will you throw me into the water, you scoundrels? Hah! what are you at? Aw—a—a! what a magnificent salmon I had caught when you snapt my line. Eh!—hah—aw—a—aw. I believe I have been dozing.

GRANT.—Nay, not dozing only, but snoring; and, finally, fishing in your sleep.

CLIFFORD.—Then am I a fool, aw—a—a—to

stay here awake doing nothing, when I might go to bed and there so happily continue the sport which you so cruelly interrupted,—aw—a—aw, so good night to you,—I'm off.

Taking up his candle, Clifford quickly disappeared, and following his example, we broke up for the night; and having agreed to devote the next day to our friend's favourite sport, we invited our new acquaintance, the schoolmaster, to dine with us again.

Next day Grant and I spent five or six hours in thrashing the river, without being gratified even with a single rise; whilst Clifford killed no less than three large salmon and one grilse. We expected that he would have crowed mightily over us, and we accordingly exhibited great humbleness of aspect in his presence. But he was magnanimous beyond our hopes.

CLIFFORD.—Don't be downcast, my dear friends, your fate had been mine and mine yours, had we only exchanged our fly-boxes in the morning. Your flies have been made by some Cockney, for fishing in the New River. These Limerick hooks are the things; they never fail. You shall try them next time, and I'll warrant your success.

Clifford picked out the best fish for our dinner; and after a liberal provision of those ingredients which are supposed to contribute to the sociality of an evening.

AUTHOR, (*to Clifford*).—Come along, Mr. Secretary, "how stands your book?

CLIFFORD.—Mr. MacPherson is down two or three times over. But, for aught I know, he may have told all his tales last night while I slept. By the by, I have to apologize to him for having done so.

DOMINIE.—Hout no, sir, I am sure I am well pleased if my tales can in any manner of way contribute to your happiness, whether it may be by exciting your interest or mirth, or by lulling you to sweet repose. I am not the first story-teller whose tales have had a soporific yeffeck.

CLIFFORD.—Can you favour us then,—you will yourself recollect which of your stories comes first in the list.

DOMINIE.—'Pon my word, sir, my memory does not serve me in that respeck. But I have another story altogether, in which the Laird of Ballindalloch was also concerned; and, as it has been brought to my mind, nay, I may say, into my vurra mouth at this moment, by the pleasing

flavour of Mr. Clifford's excellent fish, on which we have all dined so heartily, I may as well give you that.

CLIFFORD.—You are a perfect mine of legendary lore, Mr. MacPherson.

LEGEND OF THE LAST GRANT OF TULLOCHCARRON.

In my legend of yesternight, gentlemen, I think I told you, that one of Ballindalloch's especial reasons for selecking the site he did, for his Peel Tower was the commanding view which he thence enjoyed all over the lands of Tullochcarron, lying above the fork of the Aven and the Spey, and which then belonged to another family of Grants, with whom he was liable to be frequently at dagger's drawing. It is of the last laird of Tullochcarron, that I am now going to tell you.

In the earlier part of his life, this laird of Tullochcarron lost a younger brother, who was killed while fighting bravely by his side, in a feudal skirmish with a former laird of Ballindalloch. Tullochcarron had a strong affection for this brother,

and would have been inconsolable for his death, had he not left an only son behind him, called Lachlan Dhu. Tullochcarron was then unmarried, and he therefore instantly transferred all that which had been his fraternal affection, to his orphan nephew. Accordingly, he set himself to nurture the boy with all the care and solicitude he could bestow, and with the full intention of making him his heir. But you are well enough aware, gentlemen, that yeddication in those days must have been a mere farce. Indeed, judging from the worthy Dame Julian Berner's Boke of St. Alban's, the which, I take it for granted, was the gentleman's *vade mecum* in its day, it was worse than a farce, nothing being taught there but hawking and hunting, and the mysteries thereof; as, for example, how to physic a sick falcon, and such like follies, with all the foolish vanities of coat armour, and the frivolities of fishing. Eh! I beg your pardon, Mr. Clifford! I see you are not just altogether pleased with that observe of mine. But I meant no offence,—as sure as death I did not. Where was I? Well,—as the lad, Lachlan Dhu, grew up, certain indications of ane evil disposition began to manifest themselves, and these unpromi-

sing buds did so bourgeon through time, that after trying to prune away the wicked shoots that sprang from them, and finding, as is often the case, that they only sprouted forth the thicker and the stronger for the lopping, like the poisonous heads of the hydra, the good Tullochcarron found himself compelled to abandon his kind intentions towards the young man, so far as regarded the heirship. But he still continued to make his house his home, and likewise to show him all such kindness as an uncle might be expected to use towards a nephew.

Being thus disappointed in his views of a successor, the worthy man set himself to the serious consideration of another plan, and having cast his eyes about him, they fell upon a fair leddy, whom he resolved, with her consent, to make his wife, and accordingly, after a reasonable courtship, they were married. No couple could have been happier than they were, and his joy was, in due time, rendered complete by the birth of a son and heir, who was called Duncan. But, alas! what is yearthly felicity? Fleeting as the wintry sunbeam on a wall. His beloved wife died soon after the birth of her infant boy, whom she left as the only remaining hope of his family.

Lachlan Dhu had nearly reached manhood before his uncle's marriage, but Tullochcarron had taken especial care, from the very first, never to allow his nephew to know that he ever had any intention of leaving him the succession of his estate. There was therefore no ostensible cause for disappointment or jealousy in Lachlan. But the youth was sharp enough to have seen the position in which he had so long stood, and to have drawn his own conclusions; and certain it was, that jealousy and disappointment did follow his uncle's marriage, and the birth of his cousin Duncan. But young though he might be, he was already so profound a master of the art of dissimulation, that he not only most perfectly concealed them, but he actually contrived to produce so great a seeming change for the better in his own character, that he gradually succeeded in vurra much effacing the recollection of his former errors and iniquities from the memory of his kind and forgiving uncle.

Duncan Bane, as the young Tullochcarron was called from his fair complexion, was, in every respect a contrast to Lachlan Dhu, or Black Lachlan. Tullochcarron had committed his infant boy to be nursed and fostered by a respectable lady, a

distant relation of the family, who though low in circumstances, was high in piety and virtue. To this lady the infant Duncan opportunely came to supply the place of a child she had just then lost, and as the little fellow drew his nourishment from her bosom, all the strength of a mother's attachment fell in tender sorrow upon him; and he who never knew any other mother, repaid it with corresponding affection. Tullochcarron was too conscious of the failure in his attempt at yeddication, in the instance of his nephew, to risk a repetition of it in the still more interesting case of his son. He therefore gladly left the tutoring of the boy to the care of his excellent nurse, who appears to have been as intellectually gifted as any woman of these barbarous times could have been. It is true that she must, in all probability, have been tinctured with some portion of the learning of Dame Julian. For, although nothing remains to establish that the young man had studied hawking and hunting,—the legend certainly informs us, that he had a complete knowledge of, and an ardent love for,—hum —ha—I would say for that art of which it would ill become me to speak dispraisingly, seeing that we have had this evening so much reason to thank

Mr. Clifford, for having so ably and successfully exercesed it. But—what was much better—under her godly care, the boy's heart was filled with all the best feelings of religion and humanity. He was amiable, generous, and kind-hearted, and ever ready on all occasions to sacrifice his own little interests to those of others; and he was so utterly devoid of guile himself, that he felt it almost impossible to imagine its existence in others. It was not wonderful, therefore, that he grew up with the warmest attachment to his cousin, Lachlan Dhu, who was the very prince of deceivers, and who well knew how to put on the mask of kindness. He allowed no opportunity of gaining his young cousin's affections to pass unprofitably, and so unremitting was his attention to the young Duncan, that he even succeeded in throwing sand into the eyes of old Tullochcarron himself, who began to thank Heaven for the happy change that had taken place on his nephew, and to trust that he might yet look to him as the future protector of his son's youth and inexperience, in the very probable event of his being called from this world before his boy had grown to the years of manhood.

But the old man was still a hale and hearty

carle, when his boy's seventeenth birthday came round. He had indeed been a marvellously stout and healthy man all his life. The only disease, indeed, with which he had ever been afflicted, was an almost insatiable appetite for food, which no endeavours of his own could restrain. It was a never ending ravenous hunger, for which the poor man was by no means morally responsible, and from the gnawing effects of which he must have died, if it had not been frequently and largely administered to. Nor did he ask for dainties, although there certainly was one species of food which he preferred to all others when he could get it in its season, and that was—salmon. Tullochcarron's complaint, as you may very naturally conceive, grew with his growth, which was immense, and increased with every additional year that he lived. But, old as he was, and enormous as he became in bulk, his great strength remained unimpaired, and he was still able to move about with wonderful activity in the superintendance of his concerns.

I have already told you, that although he and Ballindalloch were not at absolute war, yet there did exist between them that ancient grudge and

jealousy, left by the ill-salved, though apparently bandaged up wounds of a peace, patched together when both parties had suffered too much to continue the war. And although the then existing Ballindalloch was not the man in whose reign and under whose attack Tullochcarron's much-loved brother had fallen, yet those were times in which the son was made answerable for his father's sins. The then laird of Ballindalloch, therefore, succeeded to all that secret animosity which his father had so industriously laboured to earn. Thus, as one might say, the military precaution, as well as the civil management of Tullochcarron's little kingdom, required ane active superintendance and administration. But although he now scrupled not to employ his nephew in all duties where he thought his services might be useful to him, and although he had even begun of late to give occasional occupation to his son, yet, as they used to say in those days, he was *aye upon the head of his own affairs himself*, watched every thing with his own eye, and gave every order of importance from his own mouth.

Lachlan Dhu, then, having but little else in which to employ himself, spent most of his time in

the chase, and the venison which he slew was always sure to procure him a blessing from his hungry uncle. As for Duncan Bane, his whole attention was directed to fishing, and the salmon which he caught were always sure to be more highly prized than the best buck that his cousin ever brought from the forest. In strict attention to the fack, as well as in justice to the character of the youth himself, I must tell you, that the desire of procuring savoury dishes for his father, to whom his devoted attachment was excessive, was one great reason, as well as in some measure an apology,—that is, I mean, a-a to say, Mr. Clifford, if fishing ever required any apology at all, which I must confess, your excellent salmon of this day hath led me vurra much to doot; I say it was a good reason for his following out that quieter sort of sport, instead of that of the chase, which some of your wild Nimrods would look upon as by much the more active and manly. But I must likewise inform you, that there was also a secondary cause that contributed to make him prefer this occupation to all others. This cause, you will doubtless consider of inferior strength to the other; but still it is a cause which is in itself supposed by many to

be very powerful in some of its effecks; the cause I mean was—love.

Anna Gordon was the eldest of three orphans who were left to the care of their aunt, who was the vurra lady whom I have already introduced to you as the nurse and female preceptor of the youth Duncan Bane. Anna was but a year younger than the young laird of Tullochcarron. They had grown up together, and had loved one another like companions until their attachment insensibly assumed a warmer character. The penury to which the Gordons and their aunt had been reduced by circumstances, had hitherto induced Duncan to keep the mutual passion that subsisted between him and Anna a secret from his father, who never ceased to talk of some splendid alliance for his son as one of his most favourite schemes. But as this love of the young man for the lady waxed stronger, his fondness for fishing was most strangely and marvellously augmented in a similar proportion. Were I to attempt to guess at the cause of this whimsical combination of two predilections apparently so inconsistent with one another, I should say, that he began daily more and more to take to fishing, because it furnished him

with an apology for more frequently visiting his nurse's cottage, that was situated on a beautifully wooded knoll rising on the north bank of the river Aven. It was, moreover, an amusement which he could pursue without losing the society of her he loved. For as he loitered along the river's bank with his angle-rod in his hand, Anna Gordon was ever at his side; and I am doubting much that they wasted many a good hour in idle talk rather than in fishing. But I am no more than the simple historian of their tale, therefore it is no business of mine to defend either him or her from the charge which you will of necessity bring against both of them for such a mis-spending of their precious time. However, I'm thinking, gentlemen, that they must have had some peculiar pleasure in one another's conversation, or they never would have stolen secretly away thus by them-two-selves, as they were continually wont to do, even escaping from Anna's little sister and brother. The boy, poor little fellow, had been born deaf and dumb, and could have understood no other language but that of the eyes; and let me tell you, gentlemen, that learned as I am in tongues, both ancient and modern, that is one of which I must confess my-

self to have no knowledge, though they do say that there is much eloquence in it when it is rightly comprehended. It was not always an easy matter to *jink* these two children, for Duncan Bane had been so kind to both of them, especially to the poor dumb boy, that wherever he went, they ran after him like two *penny doggies;* and as he had too much good feeling in his composition to allow him to treat them harshly, he was often obliged to steal their sister Anna away from them when he wished to have a private saunter with her.

The lovers had one day escaped from them and all the world in this manner, for Duncan was anxiously desirous to be alone with Anna, that he might learn from her why it was that her fair brow wore an unwonted cloud upon it, and why her large blue eyes seemed to have been dimmed by recent tears. He was impatient till they reached a grove by the river's side, which was their ordinary place of retreat, when they wished to be free from all vulgar or prying eyes.

"Anna," said the youth, the moment they had got within its shade, "something unpleasant has befallen thee; though thy face cannot be robbed

of its loveliness, yet it wants to-day that smile which is wont to be the sunshine of my heart."

"I must try to call it up, then," said she, with an effort to be playful that could not be mistaken. "I would not have thy heart chill if I can help it."

"Nay, but I entreat thee to tell me what has vexed thee, my love!" said he tenderly. "If I cannot relieve thy distress, let me at least share it with thee!"

"I would fain tell thee, Duncan," replied she, for I would fain shut up no secrets from thee in that heart which is so entirely thine—but"——

"But what, my dearest?" cried Duncan impatiently; "do not keep me longer in suspense. There ought, indeed, to be no secrets with either of us that are not shared between us."

"There never shall be any on my part," said Anna, throwing down her eyes. "And yet—and yet I have much difficulty in uttering what I would now tell thee."

"Keep me on the rack no longer, my love, I beseech thee!" said Duncan.

"I *will* take courage to tell thee, then," said she, "but thou must first give me a solemn promise."

"What! of secrecy?" said Duncan. "Methinks thou mayest safely enough trust to me in that respect."

"The promise I would exact of thee goes somewhat beyond that of mere secrecy," said she gravely. "Thou must promise me that thou will not *act* upon what I have to tell thee, but in such manner as prudence may permit me to sanction."

"And dost thou think, my Anna," replied Duncan, "that I could ever do, or desire to do, any thing that thou couldst wish me not to do?"

"But promise me, solemnly promise me!" said Anna, persevering with unwonted eagerness in her demand; "do promise me, I entreat thee!"

"Well, well, I do promise thee,—thus solemnly promise thee," replied Duncan, kissing the hand which he held. "And now, come! relieve my anxiety,—what is this gloomy secret? This is the first time I have seen traces of tears in thine eyes since the death of the poor thrush I gave thee."

"The present matter is somewhat more serious," said Anna, with a gravity and dignity of manner which he had never seen her assume before. "Your cousin, Lachlan Dhu, dared this morning to address me in odious terms, which he called

love. I answered him with a scorn and a reproof which I had hardly believed my young, weak, and untaught tongue could have used to one of his manhood. But the Blessed Virgin lent me language; and he stood so abashed before me, that I trust I have reason to hope that he will not again dare to repeat his offence."

"My cousin, Lachlan!" exclaimed Duncan, overwhelmed with astonishment. "My cousin, Lachlan, didst thou say? Did my ears hear thee aright? Impossible!"

"I grieve to say it is too true," said Anna Gordon.

"Oh! villain, villain!" cried Duncan. "Most deep and consummate villain! Can so much apparent goodness be but the mask of deceit and villainy? But—I must straightway question him! I will drag him from the disguise which he wears —and—and then!"

"Remember that solemn promise which you have this moment made to me," said Anna, calmly taking his hand. "You see how wise it was in me to secure it. To be the innocent cause of awakening feud between kinsmen of blood so near, would indeed be a heavy affliction to me; and

were any of that blood to be spilled—were thy blood to flow—but thou must keep thy solemn engagement to me; and thou must now pledge me thy word, that never till I give thee leave to do so, wilt thou, even by a look, discover to any one what I have now told thee."

"Anna," said Duncan, after some little hesitation, "I will promise you what you desire; but my promise is given on the faith of a counter-pledge, which I now expect to have from thee. Promise me, on thy part, that no such cause of offence shall be again offered to thee that thou dost not instantly tell me of it."

"My present frankness should be my best pledge that I will do as thou wouldst have me," said Anna. "But the promise thou hast given me must then be held as consequently renewed."

"I am content," said Duncan. "I am content to trust that you will not tie me down too rigidly."

Guileless as Duncan Bane naturally was, he felt it no easy task to commence and to carry on a train of dissimulation with one with whom he had been on terms of open and unreserved intercourse of mind from his childhood, as I may say, save on the one subject of his love alone. Duncan dread-

ed that the very next meeting he should have with his cousin, would throw him off his guard. He, therefore, proceeded forthwith to school himself as to the face and manner he should wear, and the words he should utter; and so successfully did he do so in his own judgment, that, after the first interview with his cousin was over, he congratulated himself, that the deep dissatifaction which he secretly felt had been entirely shrouded from him who had excited it. And certainly, whether it was so or not, the crafty Lachlan Dhu gave him no reason to believe that it was discovered.

It was on the vurra night after this, however, that the Laird of Ballindalloch was seated in the cap-house of the great round tower of the castle he had so lately built, engaged in some confidential talk with his faithful henchman, Ian Grant, when his favourite old sleuth-hound, that lay beside his chair, raised up his long heavy ears, and growled; and soon afterwards a step was heard ascending the narrow screw stair leading to the small apartment where they were.

"See who is there, Ian," said the laird, in answer to a gentle tap at the door.

Ian obeyed; and on opening it, one of the do-



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mestics appeared to announce, that a stranger, who refused to tell his name, had been brought, at his own request, to the castle guard-room, having expressed a wish to be admitted to a private conference with the laird."

"A stranger demands to have an interview with me after the watch is set, and yet refuses to tell who or what he is!" cried Ballindalloch. "By Saint Peter, but this smells of treachery, methinks! Yet let him appear, we fear him not: let him appear, I say," repeated he, waving off the attendant. "Ian," continued he after the man was gone, "look that your dirk be on your thigh."

"My dirk is here, sir, and sharp," readily replied the henchman, as he moved towards the door, and planted himself beside it, to be prepared to strike, if any sudden emergency should require him to do so.

Again steps were heard ascending the stair—the door opened—and the door-way was filled by the bulky figure of a man, whose dark features were almost entirely hid by a blue Kelso bonnet of more than ordinary breadth, and the ample web of a large hill-plaid, of the red Grant tartan, put on as Highlanders know how to do when they

would fain conceal themselves, completely enveloped the whole of his figure, as well as the lower part of his face, leaving little more visible than the tip of his nose and his dark moustachios. For some moments he stood silent before Ballindalloch.

"Speak!" said the laird at length. "Thy name and thine errand at this untimeous hour!"

"Ballindalloch," replied the stranger, looking around him, and glancing at Ian, "thou shalt have both incontinently, but it must be in thine own particular ear alone."

"Leave us then, Ian," said Ballindalloch, waving him away, whilst at the same time he stretched forth his hand to lift his claymore within easier reach of the place where he sat. "Leave us I say, Ian! I would be private with this stranger."

"Uve! uve!" said Ian under his breath—then he moved—hesitated—shrugged his shoulders—looked at the stranger as if he would have penetrated him, plaid and all, to the very soul—then he shifted his position—yet still he did not quit the chamber, but stood and threw an imploring look of remonstrance towards the laird.

"Begone, Ian!" said Ballindalloch in a voice

of impatience; and Ian at last vanished at the word.

"Sir stranger!" said Ballindalloch, "I hope I may now ask thee to rid me of all this mystery."

"I am most ready to do so, Ballindalloch," said the other, laying aside his bonnet and plaid, and showing himself, to all appearance, entirely unarmed.

"Lachlan Dhu Grant of Tullochcarron!" exclaimed the laird with astonishment, "what stirring errand has moved thee hither at such an hour?"

"I come to thee but on peaceful private conference," replied Lachlan Dhu, with a respectful obeisance; "and I use this secrecy, because it is for the interest of both of us, that what I have to treat of should reach no other ears but our own."

"Proceed," said Ballindalloch, "thou mayest speak safely here, for in this place we are beyond all ear-shot."

"I need not tell thee, Ballindalloch," continued Lachlan Dhu, "I need not tell thee, I say, that which is sufficiently notour to all, that mine uncle, old Tullochcarron's patrimony would have been mine as a fair succession, had he not married on purpose to disappoint me."

"I know this much," said Ballindalloch, not altogether dissatisfied to see something like discontent in what he naturally held to be the enemy's camp. "Perhaps thou hast had but scrimp justice in this matter."

"Justice!" exclaimed Lachlan Dhu, catching eagerly at his words. "Justice! I have been deeply wronged. Bred up and cockered by the old man for a time as his successor, as if it had been with the very intent of throwing me the more cruelly off, and rendering the blasting of my hopes the more bitter, from the very fairness of those blossoms which his pretended warmth of affection had fostered!"

"'Twas not well done in the old man," said Ballindalloch; "but now, methinks, 'tis past all cure."

"Nay," said Lachlan Dhu sternly, "I hope there is yet ample room for remede."

"As how, I pr'ythee?" said Ballindalloch.

"Mark me, and thou shalt quickly learn," said Lachlan Dhu. "But first of all I must tell thee, that I now come to offer myself to thee as thy vassal, on this simple condition, that thou wilt

give me thine aid and countenance against all questioners to help me to keep what shall be mine own after I shall have fairly won it."

"And how dost thou propose to win it?" demanded Ballindalloch, with a grave and serious air that seemed to argue a most attentive consideration of a proposal in itself so inviting to him.

"By secretly ridding myself of mine uncle's sickly stripling boy, whenever favouring fortune may yield me fitting opportunity," replied Lachlan Dhu, approaching his head nearer to Ballindalloch, and sinking his voice to a low sepulchral tone, and with a coolness that might have befitted a practised murderer.

"What!" exclaimed Ballindalloch, with an air of surprise. "What hath the youth done to deserve so much of thy hatred?"

"Twice hath he crossed my path," continued Lachlan Dhu, his features blackening, and his dark eye-balls rolling as he spoke. "He hath twice crossed my path; first, when he came into this world, and now a second time by thwarting me in my love."

"And what have I to do with all this?" demanded Ballindalloch.

"Much," replied Lachlan Dhu, earnestly. "I am now thy sworn vassal. The feudal superiority of Tullochcarron will henceforth ensure to thee friendship and strength, where thou hast long had to deal with open or secret foes, and"——

"Thou speakest as if thou wert already Laird of Tullochcarron," said Ballindalloch, interrupting him.

"That young *foulmart* once disposed of, I soon shall be," said Lachlan Dhu, with fiend-like expression. "Mine uncle's time cannot now be long, even were nature left to take its course; or,—it may be shortened. Sudden death to a man of his gross form and *purfled* habit could never seem strange—and then"——

"True," said Ballindalloch calmly; "but how can I aid thee in thy scheme?"

"I lack no present aid while I have this arm," replied Lachlan Dhu; "it is the support and defence of thy faithful vassal, Lachlan Dhu Grant, Laird of Tullochcarron, that I require of thee, if unhappily some unlucky circumstance should awaken idle suspicions against him."

"I trust I shall always know how to defend my vassals," said Ballindalloch proudly.

"Then am I safe," said Lachlan Dhu; "but in the meanwhile secrecy is essential to our purpose."

"I hope I have prudence enough to know how to conduct myself in all cases of delicacy," replied Ballindalloch.

"'Tis well," said Lachlan Dhu, again folding his plaid around him, and putting on his bonnet. "Now I must begone; for time presses. Farewell! I shall trust to thee, and thou mayest trust to me."

"I shall not forget what is due to thee, when thou art my vassal," said the laird, "nor shall I ever forget what ought at all times to be expected from Ballindalloch. Here!—Ian Dhu!—See this stranger safe beyond the walls and outposts."

The night I speak of seemed to be quite pregnant with strange visitations; for, at a still later hour, after old Tullochcarron had himself seen that the guard at the barbican of his small place of strength was on the alert, and had secured the iron doors of the entrance of the peel tower, and had finally retired to his apartment to go to rest, he was surprised to see a packet lying on his table, of which no one of his attendants could give him any account. It was tied with a morsel of ribbon, the

ends of which were secured with wax, but without any impression. It was simply addressed:—

"To Tullochcarron."

And on cutting it open, he found that it contained the following letter, with a broad seal at the end of it.

"Tullochcarron,—I write this private communication, to tell thee that thou hast a traitor in thy house, that thou dost nourish a viper in thy bosom that would sting thee. The life of thine only son is certain to be taken, if thou dost not secure it by the instant seizure of thy nephew, Lachlan Dhu. Thine own murder will speedily follow. The cold-blooded villain came to me secretly under the cloud of this night, and did unfold his devilish plans, offering to me the feudal superiority of thy lands of Tullochcarron, provided I should protect him as my vassal against all after question. I seemed to listen, and yet I evited direct promise; and I now hasten to certiorate thee of these facts through ane trusty messenger, who engages, by certain means best known to himself, to have these placed upon thine own private table before thou sleepest. This traitorie is as yet alone known to thee, to me, to the foul faitour who planned, and

to the devil who prompted it. And that thou mayest have no doubt left in thee of the truth of what I have here written, I do hereto affix my sign-manual, as well as the seal, the which is attached to the last instrument of pacification that passed between our houses.—Ballindalloch."

You may conceive, gentlemen, that this letter, read alone, at midnight in his chamber, dreadfully alarmed old Tullochcarron. He started from the large oaken chair in which he had seated himself to peruse it, and snatching his lamp, he rushed to his son's apartment, where he held up the light, and gazed with fear and trembling on his son's couch, almost expecting to see his boy foully murdered, and weltering in his blood. Stretched on his bed, he did indeed find him; but his eyes were closed in the sweet slumbers that attend the pillow of pure and spotless youth. He gazed on him in silent anxiety for some time, till he was really certain that he breathed; and then the old man's lip quivered, and his eyes were dimmed by the big drops that rapidly distilled over his eyelids. Stooping gently down, he kissed Duncan's cheek, and then quitting the room upon tiptoe, he called up an old and tried domestic.

"Hamish," said he "I had a strange and troubled dream, as I dozed in mine arm-chair."

"Thou didst sup somewhat of the heaviest, Tullochcarron, replied Hamish.—"After so many pounds' weight of salmon, 'tis but little wonder if the foul hag on her night mare should have been riding over and over thee."

"Psha!" said Tullochcarron in a vexed tone and manner that showed he was too seriously affected to be trifled with.—"My dream touched the safety of thy young master. Hark ye! I bid thee watch his couch, and let no one approach it with impunity."

"My young master!" said Hamish with energy. These grey hairs shall be trodden under foot ere the latch of his door shall be touched."

I know thy fidelity," said Tullochcarron. "Be sure thou givest me the alarm if aught extraordinary should occur."

Having taken this hasty precaution, the old laird of Tullochcarron again seated himself in his arm-chair to read over for the second time the alarming communication he had received. Ballindalloch's name and seal were the first things his eyes rested on after opening it. Doubts and suspicions instantly flashed across his mind.

"What a silly fool am I after all," said he, "to let any information from such a quarter so agitate me! What truth is to be expected from a house so full of hereditary enmity against mine of Tullochcarron! And is not Lachlan Dhu the son of that very brother of mine who worked so much sore evil to the house of Ballindalloch? And is he not at this moment the best, the stoutest, and the sharpest arrow I have in my quiver? And are not these reasons enough to prompt such a secret enemy to urge me to whet my knife against him? Dull old idiot that I was! but now I see it all!—I see it all!—What a trap was I about to run my head into!—But stay, let me think what is best to be done. Prudent precautions with regard to my son can do no harm. I shall put him well on his guard; and that secured, the best thing I can do is to the bury the contents of this paper in mine own bosom."

With such determinations as these, Tullochcarron retired to rest; but his repose was disturbed and put to flight by visions which were not altogether to be laid to the account of the heavy meal he had taken ere he retired to rest. He was early visited by his son Duncan.

"Father," said the young man, "how was it that old Hamish took post in my chamber last night? I found him sitting by my bed-side at daybreak this morning, and all the explanation I could extract from him was that he had the laird's orders for being there."

"He had my orders, my dear boy," said Tullochcarron, pressing his son to his bosom, and kissing his forehead. "A strange dream had come over me, that alarmed my foolish old heart about thy safety."

"A dream about me!" said the young man smiling, "What harm couldst thou dread for me, father?"

"I dreamed that thy life was threatened, boy," said his father; and therefore it was that I made Hamish watch thee."

"My life in danger, father!" exclaimed Duncan, "and from whose hand?"

"From the hand of thy cousin Lachlan Dhu," replied his father: "Hast thou any cause to dread that my dream might have aught of reality in it?"

"My cousin Lachlan Dhu!" exclaimed Duncan, with unfeigned surprise—"Nay," continued

he, after some little hesitation, during which he remembered the promise he had given to Anna Gordon: "why should I think that Lachlan should wish to injure me?"

"Why *should* we think it, indeed?" exclaimed the old man, with considerable emotion: "Both I and mine should look for any thing but hostility from Lachlan Dhu, if there be any faith or gratitude left in man. Let us then think no more about it."

"Trust me, I shall think no more of it," said Duncan.

"Aye!" said the old man again; "but yet I'd have thee to be cautious. I would entreat thee to guard thyself as if there were danger. Thou hast a dirk and a hand to use it, boy! Thou hast a claymore and an arm that can wield it; and though thou art as yet but a stripling, still thou art the son of old Tullochcarron! But let faithful Hamish be thy constant henchman, and then my heart will be at ease."

"I will defend mine own head as a true Tullochcarron should do, if dirk or steel can do it;" said the youth energetically, and by no means relishing the idea of his motions being watched, and

his person eternally haunted by an attendant. "But I have nothing to fear, and Hamish might be better employed than in following me in all my idle wanderings."

Duncan thought with himself that he had perhaps better grounds for entertaining some suspicion of evil intentions against him on the part of his kinsman, than any which a dream could have afforded to his father; and yet we must not wonder, gentlemen, that, in such superstitious times, old Tullochcarron's alleged vision had also its own effect upon the young man, when taken in combination with that strange new light that had recently opened on his cousin's character. The gallant youth was above all fear, however; but he had prudence enough to resolve to expose himself to no unnecessary danger. As to old Hamish, Duncan thought it better to gratify his father, by allowing that faithful servant to be his companion at all times, save and except only when he went to meet her, of his attachment to whom he still thought it wise to keep Tullochcarron ignorant. Then, indeed, the God of Love inspired him with so much ingenuity in escaping from his attendant, that he baffled every attempt at discovery.

It was upon one of these occasions, when he had an especial wish to have an hour or two of private talk with Anna Gordon, that he, in the first place, contrived to escape from old Hamish, and afterwards to steal her from her dumb brother and little sister. Away tripped the pair together, laughing, and rejoicing in their own cleverness. Duncan had his angle-rod in his hand, but he wandered with Anna through the groves, by the margin of the Aven, without ever thinking of casting a line into its waters. The subject of their conversation was one of peculiar interest to both of them, for Duncan had sought this interview, for the purpose of informing her, that, from certain circumstances which had recently occurred, he was led to believe that their secret attachment might now be safely divulged to the old laird his father, in the hope that he might be brought to consent to the speedy solemnization of their marriage. The time they spent together was by no means short, though to them it appeared as trifling. At length they found out that it *was* time to part; and a more than usually lingering parting took place between them on the top of that *vurra* high and precipitous crag, where now rests the northern extremity of the

noble bridge that spans the river Aven aoove Ballindalloch. When they did at last sever from each other, Anna took her way homeward by a footpath leading up the river through the thick oak copsewood that covered the ground behind it, and clustered to the very brink of the precipice where she left Duncan.

The young man stood entranced with his own happy thoughts for a moment after Anna had disappeared, and then bethinking him that he must hasten to make the best use of the time that now remained, if he would not return empty-handed to his father, he stood on the verge of the cliff, eyeing the stream below, and thoroughly occupied in preparing his tackle with all manner of expedition, previous to descending by a circuitous way to the water's edge to commence his sport. He was alone, as you may think, gentlemen; but there was an evil eye that watched him with the tiger's lurid and unvarying gaze, aye, with such a gaze as the tiger's fiery orbs assume, when he has slowly and silently tracked his unconscious prey through all the mazes of the jungle, till he at last beholds it within his reach. As the head of the traitor, Lachlan Dhu, appeared from the thicket, within

three paces of the spot where young Tullochcarron stood, a fiendish smile of eager triumph gave a hellish expression to its features. It was but one desperate spring. One piercing shriek was uttered by the unhappy Duncan Bane, and in one instant his lifeless corse was floating, shattered and bleeding, on the crystal stream of the Aven.

That scream was heard by Anna Gordon, and from the moment it entered into her ears, it never left her mind. As it reached her, she happened to be passing round a turn of the river some little way above, whence the fatal crag was still visible.

"Merciful saints!" she cried, as she turned quickly round, "that was my Duncan's voice!"

She caught one instantaneous glimpse of the figure of Lachlan Dhu, as he fled from the summit of the crag. A dreadful suspicion shot across her mind. Winged by her agonizing terrors, she flew back to the spot where she had parted with Duncan. There she met the poor dumb boy, her brother, pulling his little sister along by the arm. No sooner did he behold Anna, than with a wild animation of countenance, and with gesture so expressive, that no one but a creature deprived of the power of language could have employed, he imi-

tated the action of one person pushing another over the face of the cliff, and then he ran down the path that followed the course of the stream. Anna rushed frantically after him; and when she had reached the margin of the Aven, her eyes rested on the lifeless corse of her beloved, which had been carried by the eddying current into a little quiet nook, where it lay half-stranded on a grassy bank.

It happened that old Hamish, who as usual had been anxiously seeking his young master, came a few moments afterwards accidentally to the same spot; and what a spectacle did he behold! Seated on the bank by the water's edge, was the wretched Anna Gordon, with her lover's mangled and bleeding head upon her knee. Her eyes were fixed upon its livid and gory features, as if they had been gazing on vacancy. Not a tear flowed, not a groan nor a sigh was uttered. A monumental group could not have been more motionless or silent. Hamish was distracted. He tried to make her speak; for altogether ignorant of the powerful cause of interest which operated upon her, he viewed her but as an idle spectator, an indifferent person, from whom he anxiously desired to extract

something that might enable him to guess as to how this dreadful calamity had occurred. His questions were rapid, urgent, and incessant; but still she minded him not, until he bent forward as if to attempt to lift the body from her knee. Then it was, that turning round with all the frenzied dignity of fixed insanity, she fastened the severe gaze of her unsettled eyes upon him, and spoke in a tone that froze his very heart.

"Begone, old man!" said she, "begone. What! wouldst thou rob me of my love on our bridal day? He is mine! he is mine! But hush," said she, suddenly lowering her voice and changing her expression, "hush! he sleeps! He slumbers sweetly now. But he will awake anon with smiles, and then our bridal revels will begin. Go, go, old man! go, bid the guests! Bid all!—bid all, I tell thee!—bid all, but—but—the murderer!" A shrill shriek, graduating into a violent hysterical laugh, followed these wild wandering words; and a convulsion shook her delicate frame, till she fainted away, as if life itself had fled from her.

I must leave this heart-rending scene, gentle-

men, to tell you what soon afterwards took place in the old peel-tower of Tullochcarron.

"What!" exclaimed the laird, as he was in the act of sitting down to one of those many meals which the craving of his naturally enormous appetite rendered so essentially necessary for him. "What!" said he, "still no salmon? Hath Duncan not yet returned, then? Why, methinks the boy must have tyned his luck altogether. But I trow that the fish have lost the way into our waters, they are so rare to be seen. Ha! who comes there with haste so impatient? Is it thou, Lachlan Dhu?"

"Alas, uncle!" cried the murderer, rushing in without his bonnet, and with a frantic air, "alas, uncle! alas! alas! Duncan! Duncan!"

"What—what of Duncan?" exclaimed the anxious and alarmed father, starting from the table.

"Duncan," cried the traitor, "my poor cousin Duncan is no more!"

"What! Duncan? Villain! accursed villain! you lie," cried the old man half-distracted, and grappling his nephew by the throat with his powerful gripe. "You lie, most accursed villain!"

"Alas! alas! I wish I did!" said Lachlan Dhu, with feigned sorrow. "But I grieve to say that what I tell is, alas, too true. I was walking accidentally by the banks of the Aven, about a bow-shot above the high craig, when, on looking towards it, I beheld him standing carelessly on the very brink of the cliff; and whether it was that his foot had tripped upon some of those roots that scramble for a sustenance over the surface of the rock, or whether some sudden gust of wind had caught him, I know not; but I saw him fall headlong thence; and after being dashed horribly against the projecting points below, I could perceive his inanimate body borne off by the stream. Wild with despair, and scarcely knowing what I was doing, I ran directly home hither to tell thee the doleful news; and"——

"Villain!" shouted the old man, in a voice like thunder. "Villain! thou art his murderer. Seize him, and drag him hence to the dungeon. He hath reft me of my boy! my only hope on earth! the solace of my old age! Oh, fool! fool! Why did I not take the well-meant warning? Oh! I am now indeed bereft! But his murderer must die ere the sun goes down. Where is Ha-

mish? He at least should have been at my poor Duncan's side!"

At that moment Hamish himself entered. He whose hypocritical acting I have just described, had taken so long to prepare it for exhibition, that this old and faithful attendant had had full time to procure help to carry his young master's remains, and had now come on before the body, with the well-meant intention of breaking the afflicting intelligence as easily as he could to the bereaved father. He had been relieved of the task, as I have already told you; and the sad news had spread so, that all the vassals and dependants within reach had crowded to meet the body of their beloved Duncan Bane. The woful wail of the pipes was heard at a distance. The old laird became dreadfully agitated. The sound drew nearer. Tullochcarron bit his nether lip, clenched his hands, and wound himself up to go through with the trying scene as he felt that Tullochcarron should do. He put on his bonnet with energy, wrapped his plaid tight around him, and descended with a resolute step into the court-yard. The clang of the pipes became louder; and yet a louder crash of their rude music burst forth, as they passed inwards from

beneath the arched gateway. The old man strode two or three steps forcibly forwards, with his eyes fixed upon the spot where the rush of human figures came squeezing in. At length his sight fell on the bloody corse of his murdered son, his only earthly hope; and he became rooted to the ground he stood on.

And now a light airy figure appeared tripping fantastically beside the bier with her hair fancifully wreathed up with worthless weeds. She came dancing towards the old laird with gay smiles upon her face, and threw herself upon her knee before him.

"Thy blessing, father! thy blessing!" said she, "we come to crave thy blessing, father! and now," continued she, starting up, "let the feast be prepared!—and the dance!—for Duncan, thine own dear Duncan, has made me his bride, and I am the happiest maiden in all Scotland!—See, see! look here, how gaily my head is garlanded! Indeed, indeed, as all the neighbours were wont to say, we were made for each other. And now I am Duncan's bride!—Aye, gentlefolks!" added she, curtseying gracefully around, and then hiding her blushing face in her hands for a moment, "and I

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shall soon be my Duncan's lady! So, as the fair maid sings in the old ballad,—

> Oh! I shall henceforth be, my love,
> As happy as a queen,
> For such a youth as thee, my love,
> Was never, never seen——never! no, never!

Father! father! thou art my father now as well as Duncan's—hath not Duncan told thee all, father! Methinks it was but to-day that we agreed to break the secret of our love to thee—and Duncan, thine own Duncan Bane, was to tell thee all! and thou wert to give us thy blessing—and we were to be wedded—aye, wedded as man and wife, never again to sunder—but my brain so burns with joy, and my foolish heart beats so, that—but no matter—ha!—I forget—I must go bid the guests! —I must away—I must go bid the bridal guests, they will take it all the kinder that I bid them myself. Hush, then!" added she, sinking her voice, and approaching the bier upon tip-toe, and gently stooping to kiss the cold lips of the corse. "Hush, then, Duncan, my love, rest thee in sweet slumber till I return. All good be with ye, good gentlefolks. Mark me, I bid ye all to our bridal—but I have

other guests to bid—I must away!—I have many guests to bid—away, away!" and so she hurried forth from the gate-way, singing as she went,—

> "And when that we shall wedded be,
> All by the holy priest,
> Full many a knight and lady bright,
> Shall grace our bridal feast."

The true interpretation of the cause of Anna's phrenzy came palpably to the mind of the old laird of Tullochcarron. Whatever he might have thought of the attachment of the lovers under other circumstances, he now felt that the discovery of it had only come like a gleam of sunshine to enhance the brightness of those earthly prospects which were henceforth darkened for ever. Yet still with iron nerve he strung himself firmly up to bear it all. He gave one piteous glance of despair towards the bier where lay the dead body of his son, his only child, and then he suffered himself to be led passively up into the hall of the Peel-tower, whither the corpse was immediately carried and laid out. Then it was that human courage could no longer support him,—it yielded, and he gave way to all a father's grief. For a time he indulged fully in this; and then drying up his tears, he

summoned his vassals, ordered in the prisoner Lachlan Dhu, and instantly proceeded to hold a court upon him.

The murderer would have fain denied his guilt, but little evidence was necessary to convict in those days. In this case there was enough to convince all present. An assize was set upon him—Ballindalloch's letter was produced and read—at once his bold and resolute air of innocence was shaken. The prisoner's own statement as to the point where he stood when he had witnessed the alleged accident, was proved to be false by old Hamish, who chanced to see him whilst running along a path which led, not from that point, but directly from the brow of the cliff whence Duncan Bane had met his death. The dumb boy described and pointed out, with most intelligent action, how and by whom the murder was perpetrated; and his little sister distinctly told, that she and her brother had seen Lachlan Dhu push Duncan Bane over the crag. Finally, the sheet was removed from the body of Duncan, and then, they say, the wounds began to well forth afresh; and the agitation of the murderer was so great, that he called for a priest, confessed all, was shortly shriven; and as the sun

of that day which had witnessed his crime was preparing to disappear behind the western mountains, its slanting rays were throwing a horrible splendour over his powerful but now examinate frame, as it swung to and fro in the evening breeze from the fatal tree on the gallow hill.

The afflicted Anna Gordon wandered wildly about with maniac energy during all that day, no one knew where. At last, her friends, who went in search of her, found her on the mountain, and led her gently homewards. It happened that the path they took passed by the gallow hill. At some distance off she descried the figure of him who had so recently paid the penalty of his crime.

"Yonder is a guest! I will bid yonder guest!" cried poor Anna, with a frantic laugh, as she broke from her friends, and hurried towards the spot where it hung, ere any one could arrest her. She stood for some moments with her eyes steadily fixed upon the ghastly visage, and then bursting out in a sudden fit of phrenzy, "I heard my Duncan's cry!" she shrieked aloud, in a voice that pierced the ears and the hearts of all who heard her. "'Twas his last joyous cry to call me to our bridal! quick!

quick !—let us away !—hark !—hark !—again !—again !—again !"

She rushed rapidly forwards a few steps, as if she had been flying to meet her lover. She tottered, and fell in a swoon, was borne home by her friends in a state of stupor, and placed in bed. But it would seem that some internal and vital failure had taken place, for the poor thing ceased to breathe; and the gentle spirit of Anna Gordon fled to unite itself with that of him she loved. Nor were their earthly remains sundered, for the father of Duncan Bane saw them consigned together to the same grave, and he wept over them both.

The old laird of Tullochcarron was but little seen beyond the court-yard of his Peel-tower for many weeks after his son's murder. Then, indeed, he did come abroad, as if to superintend his affairs as he was wont to do, but it was more because he thought that it was right for him so to do, than from any relish he had in the employment. It was this conviction of what was expected of him, that likewise made him force a false smile of cheerfulness over his good-humoured countenance,

which, alas! was with him but as the sunshine that gilded the sepulchre of unextinguishable mourning within. One of the first visits that he paid was to the castle of his ancient feudal enemy, Ballindalloch. He was kindly received, for his severe recent affliction was sincerely pitied by his generous neighbour.

"Ballindalloch," said he, "I am come to thank thee for the friendly caution which thou gavest to a foolish old man, who, if he had taken it as it was meant, would have had his roof-tree still fresh and firm. But let that pass," continued he, with a sigh, and with the full tear rising over his eye-lid. "The obligation I owe to thee is not the less, that I, blinded man, refused to give more heed to thy caution."

"Talk not of this, sir," said Ballindalloch. "I must e'en confess to thee, Tullochcarron, that the advice came from so questionable a quarter, that had I been in thy case I might have spurned it myself. But say, sir, wilt thou not eat and drink with me?"

"Willingly," replied Tullochcarron.

"Wilt thou name aught that might, perchance,

be most pleasing to thy taste?" said Ballindalloch.

"I know I need not ask for salmon," said Tullochcarron, "for such food is hardly now to be had."

"Though the fish have been somewhat rare with us of late," said Ballindalloch, "I think I can promise thee that thou shalt have as much of thy favourite dish as shall satisfy thee."

"Alas!" said Tullochcarron, with a faltering voice, and with a tear rolling down his cheek, "Salmon have, indeed, been rare with me since—since—but," added he, making a strong effort to overcome the feelings excited by the recollection of his son, and perhaps with the hope of hiding his agitation under a good-humoured jest, "I hear that the salmon are so bewitched, that they hardly ever come farther inland now than the Bog of Gight. In so great a scarcity, then, I much doubt whether the stock of fresh fish within the Castle of Ballindalloch will stand against my well-known voracity."

"Be assured that there is as much in the house, of mine own catching, too, as will extinguish thine

appetite, and leave something to spare," said Ballindalloch.

"Thou knowest not what a cormorant I am," said Tullochcarron.

"I have heard much of thy powers," said Ballindalloch.

"And I am as sharp set at this moment as ever I was in my life," said Tullochcarron.

"All that may be; yet I fear thee not," said Ballindalloch, laughing.

"Art thou bold enough to lay a wager on the issue?" demanded Tullochcarron.

"I am so bold," said Ballindalloch.

"Well, then," said Tullochcarron, "I will wager thee the succession and heirship of my lands against thy grey gelding, that I shall not leave thee a morsel to spare."

"Thou dost give me brave odds, indeed," said Ballindalloch; "thou hadst best bethink thee again ere we strike thumbs on it."

"Nay, I require no more thought," said Tullochcarron; "and, moreover, I grow hungrier every moment. Besides," said the old man with a sigh, that shewed that all this jocularity was only as-

sumed to cover a broken heart; "I am putting in peril that in which I can have no interest, whilst, if I win thy gallant grey, I shall be sure of being well mounted for the rest of my life. Art thou afraid of losing thy steed? or wilt thou say done to the wager?"

"I do say done, then, since thou wilt have it so," said Ballindalloch, and he accordingly gave the necessary orders for having the matter put to the proof.

After a little time, a serving man entered with a covered trencher, in which lay, smoking hot, one half of a small salmon. When Tullochcarron lifted the cover, he eyed it with something like contempt, and impelled as he was by his irresistible disease, he fell upon it, and devoured it with an alacrity that astonished every beholder. A whole salmon, but of moderate size, was then brought in, and was instantly attacked by Tullochcarron with as much avidity as if he had not eaten a morsel. Wonderfully and fearfully did he go on to clear his way through it; but as he approached the conclusion of it, his jaws began to go rather more languidly than before. Ballindalloch observed this.

"Ho there!—Bring more salmon!" cried he aloud.

"No," said Tullochcarron, shoving the trencher from him, and wiping his knife and fork in his napkin, and sticking them into his dirk sheath. "No, no! I have enough.—Ballindalloch, my lands shall be yours the moment the breath is out of my body."

"Nay, then," said Ballindalloch, "I must in truth and honesty confess that I called for more salmon but as a bravado; for thou hast indeed finished all the salmon that was in the house, and it is my grey gelding that is thine, not thy lands that are mine."

"It matters not, Ballindalloch," replied the other.—"The lands of Tullochcarron are thine, notwithstanding. See, there are the writings which I had made out the week after my poor Duncan was so foully murdered. Thou wilt find that thy name was then inserted therein. I but seized on this of the wager as a whimsical means of breaking the matter to thee; and now thou mayest make of Tullochcarron what it may please thee. I shall not stand long in the way, poor decayed sproutless stock as I am! and I have now known enough of

thee to be convinced that thou wilt not see me kicked over before my time; but that thou wilt take care of me during the brief space that I may yet cumber this earth, and see me laid decently beside Duncan, when I die."

Such then, gentlemen, was the way in which the lands of Tullochcarron came to be united to those of Ballindalloch,—ane union, the which I am told, did vurra much impruv the value of both, and which still subsists to the present day.

ANTIQUARIAN DISCUSSION.

CLIFFORD.—Why, this is the best story I have heard for many a day, for it has both salmon and salmon fishing in it.

AUTHOR.—The secret is out now about the fairies and the peel-tower, and, for my own part, I shall never in future doubt the *prévoyance* and judgment of these good people. Aware, as they must have been, that fate had decreed the lands of Tullochcarron to be merged in those of Ballindalloch, and seeing that this coming event would render the commanding site of Ballindalloch's proposed peel-tower utterly valueless, as he would no longer have any enemy's territory to overlook, their regard for his interest induced them to drive him out of his

fancy, and to compel him to descend into the delightful repose and shelter of the beautiful haugh below.

DOMINIE.—'Pon my word, sir, there is much reason in that observe of yours. That is always premeesing that the story I told had been a tale of reasonable and probable fack.

AUTHOR.—But as you yourself remarked at the conclusion of it, Mr. Macpherson, the wild faery tale connected with the ancient foundations of the peel-tower, may have some matter of truth wrapped up in it; and why may we not suppose, then, that Ballindalloch, having commenced some small exploratory building there, had afterwards discontinued it, when the prospect of his succession to the lands of Tullochcarron opened to him.

DOMINIE.—Troth, I'm thinking you have guessed it, sir,—that *wull* just be it.

GRANT.—The conjecture is at least as good as those of most antiquaries.

CLIFFORD.—It would certainly seem to have some *foundation* in the old site.

AUTHOR.—If that was meant as a pun, Mr. Secretary, I think you should be immediately con-

demned to tell us a long story, in expiation of so grave an offence.

CLIFFORD.—The first time, certainly, that I ever heard a pun called a *grave* offence; but, to *bury* all further controversy, I will tell you a legend which I learned when I was on a visit to some of my relations in Ross-shire; and since you think that my offence is so very heavy, I shall impose on myself a long penance, of which I pray the gods that you, my good auditors, may not suffer any share.

LEGEND OF CHIRSTY ROSS.

About the middle of last century, there resided in the burgh of Tain, on the eastern coast of Rossshire, a poor shopkeeper of the name of Ross. The contents of that strange and multifarious emporium, which he called his shop, might have been well advertised by a handbill, like that which I once met with in Ireland, where, in the long list of miscellaneous articles enumerated, I remember to have seen "tar, butter, hog's-lard, brimstone, and other sweetmeats—brushes, scythe-stones, mousetraps, and other musical instruments." You may easily imagine, that the profits arising from the sale of such trumpery wares as these, were barely sufficient to provide the necessaries of life for his numerous family, and to bestow on his children

the common education which Scotland, very much to her credit, so readily and cheaply affords. Although Mr. Ross's enjoyments were not numerous, yet, by endeavouring to have as few wants as possible, he managed to live contentedly and happily enough, and he cheerfully struggled on, drudging at his daily occupation, thanking God for the mercies which were bestowed on him, and looking forward with hope to the prospect of better days yet in store.

A circumstance occurred one afternoon, which led him to imagine that this prospect was nearer realization than he could have believed it to be. A stranger, of a spare form, and extremely atrabilious complexion, was seen to ride into the town at a gentle pace, and to go directly up to the principal house of entertainment for travellers, as if the way to it had been familiar to him. He had not been long housed there, when a waiter came across the street to Mr. Ross, with compliments "*from the gentleman at the inn*," who requested a few minutes' conversation with him. The eager shopkeeper, anticipating some important sale of his goods, waited not to doff his apron and sleeves, but hurried over the way directly, and, what was

his astonishment and delight, when, after a few words of inquiry and explanation had passed between them, he found himself weeping tears of joy in the arms of an affectionate elder brother.

This man had left his father's house when very young, with little else but hope for his portion, and after being so lost sight of by his relations, that they had long believed him to be dead, he now most unexpectedly returned to them from India with an ample fortune. Wonderful were the visions of wealth which now arose in the mind of the poor shopkeeper, and, on his warm invitation, his brother, and his brother's saddle-bags, were quickly transferred from the inn to his small and inconvenient house, and the Indian was speedily subjected to the danger of being smothered in the embraces of his sister-in-law and her numerous progeny.

Narrow as was his apartment, and small as was his bed, the nabob felt himself in elysium in his brother's house. He had never before experienced the genial effects of the warmth of kindred blood. He was idolized by every one of the family, and imminent was the risk he ran of being killed with kindness. Nor was he the great object of attention to his immediate relations alone. He soon

became the oracle of a large circle of kind friends and neighbours, who were seen crowding Mr. Ross's small back-parlour, which many of them had never before condescended to enter. And not only was the Indian feasted by small and great, but his humble brother and his sister-in-law were also invited to parties, by people who had hardly before been aware of the fact that such an individual as Mr. Ross the grocer and hardware-man existed in the place. But now Mr. Ross was not only discovered, as it were, but he was discovered to be a very sensible man, having much of his brother, the nabob's sound intellect, though wanting the advantages of cultivation. As to the nabob, he was a *rara avis in terris*,—an absolute phœnix,—a creature, a specimen of which is not to be met with in every age of the world. What the nabob uttered was considered as law; and even when he was absent, "the nabob said this," and "the nabob said that," and "that's the way the nabob likes it," were expressions continually employed by the good people of the town and neighbourhood to put an end to a debate; and they never failed to be quite conclusive upon every question. All this had a certain charm for the old Indian. It

was extremely pleasant thus despotically to rule over men's opinions, aye, and over women's too, even in such a place as Tain. But the copper of the gilded crown and sceptre of his dominion soon began to appear through its thin coating. His own origin had indeed been humble, but as his wealth had grown by degrees, so had he been gradually elevated above his original sphere, till he had at last risen into familiar intercourse with people of rank and consequence, from whose society his address, and still more, his ideas had received a certain degree of polish. This did not prevent him from greatly enjoying the plain, honest, warm, but very vulgar manners of his brother and his townsmen, whilst they were as yet new to him. They pleased him at first, precisely on the same principle of novelty, combined with old association, which made him relish for a certain time sheep's-head broth and haggis. But having unfortunately expressed himself rather strongly in his admiration of these dishes, the good folks thought themselves bound to give them to him upon all occasions, so that they soon began to lose their charm; and just so it was that the uninterrupted converse with the good, yet homely people

around him, to which he was daily subjected, very soon became dull, tiresome, ennuyant, and, finally, disgusting, until it eventually grew to be so very intolerable that he altogether abandoned the thought he had entertained of purchasing an estate in that neighbourhood which was then for sale, and he quickly came to the determination of bringing this visit to his native town to a speedy conclusion, and of returning to London to take up his abode there among people who like himself had known what it was to live on curries and mulligatawny, and who could talk with him of tiffins and tiger hunting.

How shall I describe that wet blanket of disappointment that fell upon the shoulders of Mr. Ross, the grocer and hardwareman, and his family, when the nabob communicated to them this change in his plans. All the poor shop-keeper's splendid visions departed from him with the same suddenness with which the figures from a magic lantern disappear from a wall the moment its light is extinguished. He had already set it down in his own mind as a thing absolutely certain, that his beloved brother would live and die in his house; and he and his wife had been calculating, that as every

child they had would be as a child to its bachelor uncle, every child of them would be better provided than another. Ten thousand cobwebby castles had been erected in the air by this worthy couple, who had already made lairds of all the boys, and lairds' ladies at least of all the girls. "Out of sight out of mind," was a proverb that came with chilling truth to their hearts; and although the nabob had already shown much affection to them, and had behaved generously enough in giving liberal aid towards the improvement of his brother's condition, and that of his family, yet they could not help considering his threatened separation from them as the removal of the sunshine of fortune from the hemisphere of their fate. Never was the anticipated departure of any one more deeply or sincerely deplored. The nabob himself had no such feelings. He looked forward to his escape from his relatives and friends as to a period of happy relief. Yet to this there was one exception.

Chirsty Ross, as his niece Christina was provincially called, was then a very beautiful and extremely engaging little girl of some five or six years of age. From the first day that the old Indian took up his residence in her father's house,

she had innocently and unconsciously commenced her approaches against the citadel of his heart. Each succeeding hour saw her gain outpost after outpost, and defence after defence, until she fairly entwined herself so firmly around his affections, that he could not contemplate the approaching loss of her smiles, of her kisses, and of her prattle, with any thing like philosophy. He had been naturally enough led to shower a double portion of his favours upon her. She was already in the habit of calling him "her own uncle," as if he had belonged exclusively and entirely to herself, and to this she had been a good deal encouraged by the nabob. It is not wonderful, therefore, that when his departure was communicated to her, she was thrown into an inconsolable paroxysm of grief, and clung to his knees, giving loud vent to her plaints, and sobbing as if her little heart would have burst.

"Take me with you! take me with you, my own dear uncle! oh, take your own Chirsty with you!" cried she.

"I shall take you with me, my little dear!" exclaimed the nabob, snatching her up, and kissing

her. "I shall take you with me, provided your father and mother will but part with you."

A negociation was speedily entered into. The parents were too sensible of the great advantages which such a proposal opened for their child, to think for one moment of throwing any obstacle in the way of its fulfilment. They, moreover, hoped that this arrangement might have the desirable effect of keeping up a connecting tie between them and their rich relative. However much they might have been disappointed in this last respect, they certainly never had any reason to accuse the nabob of any forgetfulness of those promises which he made to them at parting.

He was no sooner established in his house in town, than he set about providing proper instructors for Chirsty, and a very few weeks proved to him that his care was by no means thrown away. The child's perception was quick, and her desire to learn was strong; so that things which were difficult to others, were, comparatively speaking, easy to her. So rapid was her progress, that her uncle became every day more and more interested in it; and as she advanced, he was from time to

time led to engage first rate masters, in order to perfect her in all manner of solid acquirements and elegant accomplishments. With all this, her person became every day more graceful as she grew in stature; and every thing she said and did was seasoned with so much sweetness of manner, that she gained the hearts of all who had the good fortune to meet with her.

Not a little proud of what he had so good a right to call his own work, the nabob, on her fifteenth birth-day, put the master-keys of his house with great but affectionate ceremonial into her hands, and with them he gave her the entire control and management of his household affairs. But she did not long continue to enjoy the distinguished situation in which he had thus placed her. Too close an application to the numerous branches of education she occupied herself with, soon brought upon her that delicacy of health which is too often the produce of the similar over-confinement of young growing girls in our own days. A very alarming cough came on, her strength visibly declined daily, and her spirits began to sink. She was compelled to give up all her favourite pursuits. Books and music lost their charms for her, and her hours

were spent in listless idleness, not unfrequently broken in upon by nervous fits of crying, which she could by no means account for. Then it was that in her moody dreamings her mind would revert to the innocent pleasures of her childhood, to the simple, the rustic, yet highly relished happiness she had enjoyed, whilst surrounded by her brothers and sisters, when they wandered about the furzy hillocks in a joyous knot, inhaling the perfume of the rich yellow blossoms,—when they dug little caves in the sandy banks,—or built their mimic houses,—or planted their perishable gardens, with careless hearts, noisy tongues, and laughing eyes. The thought that she might never again behold them or her dear parents, renewed her tears, and she pined more and more.

Her affectionate uncle became alarmed at this rapid and melancholy change. So far as gold could purchase the aid of the best medical skill, he commanded its attendance. But even the most learned of the London physicians could discover no medicine to remove her malady. In their own minds they despaired of her, but as usually happens in such cases, to cover the deficiency of their art, they recommended her native air as the *der-*

nier ressort. Chirsty eagerly caught at this last remaining hope, so congenial to the current of her feelings at the time, and her uncle was thus obliged to yield to necessity; and as certain matters in which he had engaged rendered it quite impossible for him to take charge of her himself, he was obliged to resign her to the care of her maid.

The doctors were right for once. Every breeze that blew on her from her native land as she proceeded on her journey, seemed to be fraught with health,—her spirits rose,—and long before she reached the place of her birth, she was so far recovered as to remove all fears of any serious termination of her complaint. How did her mind go on as she travelled, sketching to itself ideal pictures of the charms of home. But alas! how changed did every person and every thing seem to her when she at last reached it.—How pitiful did the provincial town appear to her London eyes! The streets seemed to have shrunk in, and the very houses and gardens to have dwindled; and when she reached her paternal mansion, she blushed to think how very grievously the fondness of her ancient recollections had deceived her.

The full tide of unrestrained affection which burst

forth the moment she was within its walls was so gratifying to her heart, that for some time every other feeling or thought was absorbed by it; but many weeks did not pass over her head until the conversation and manners of her parents and family, which had startled her even at the first interview, began to obtrude themselves on her notice in spite of all she could do to shut her eyes against them, until they finally became intolerably disagreeable to her. She soon discovered,—and a certain degree of sorrow and self-reproach accompanied the discovery,—that the refined education which she had received, had rendered it quite impossible that she could long endure the mortifications to which she was daily and hourly exposed by her vulgar, though affectionate and well-meaning relatives. Painful as the thought was for many reasons, she became convinced of the necessity of an early separation; and, accordingly, she made her uncle's wish for her speedy return to him an apology for fixing an early day for her departure. Yet do not suppose from this that the ties of affection were not strong within her. The parting scene was not gone through without many tears and lingering embraces, that sufficiently proved

the triumph of nature in her mind over the arbitrary dictates of fashion. And after she was gone, the large richly bound folio bible, out of which her father ever afterwards read on Sundays,—the gold-mounted spectacles which enabled him so well to decipher its characters, and of which he was at all times so justly vain,—the cashmere shawl that kept her good mother so warm,—and the caps, the bonnets, the gowns, the globes, and the books of prints, with which her grown up sisters and brothers were so much delighted, and the dolls and humming tops of which the junior members of the family, down to the very youngest, were so proud as having been the gifts of "the *grand leddy from Lunnon*," for sister they dared hardly to call her, were not the only marks of her affection that she left behind her. Besides these keepsakes, there were other presents of a more solid nature bestowed in secret, which, whilst they contributed to enable her father to hold his head higher as he walked up the causeway of the main street of Tain, compelled Chirsty herself to exercise a very strict economy in providing for those wants which her own style of life rendered essential to her, large as was

the sum which she had received from the bounty of her uncle.

Passing through Edinburgh on her way to London, she was visited and kindly invited by a lady of fashion who had known her in the metropolis, and she soon found herself deeply engaged in gaiety. Perhaps she did not enter into it the less readily that she had so recently returned from what might have been well enough called her life of mortification at Tain. Having once got into the vortex, she found it difficult to extricate herself from it, and this difficulty was not lessened by the admiration which her beauty and accomplishments so universally excited both in public and in private. She became the chief object of interest, and she was so caressed and courted by every one, that it was not very surprising if the adoration that was paid to her did in some degree affect so young a head. However this might be, three things were very certain, —in the first place, that she had been extremely regular in writing to her uncle during her stay at Tain; secondly, that before leaving that place she had heard from her uncle, who had warmly expressed his anxiety for her return to him; and

thirdly, that whereas she had intended to stay in Edinburgh for two or three days only, she was led on from day to day by this ball and the other party to remain, till nearly a whole winter had melted away like its own snows, during all which time she had likewise procrastinated, and, consequently, had entirely omitted the duty of writing to her uncle.

The day of thought and of self disapproval came at length, and bitter were her reflections. She resolved at least to do all in her power to repair her fault. She sat down immediately and wrote a long letter to her uncle, in which she scrupled not to blame herself to the fullest extent for her want of thought and apparent negligence towards so kind a friend and benefactor, and she declared her repentance and her intention of returning to him immediately.

Having accordingly reached London very soon after her letter, she was driven to her uncle's well known door. Her impatience to behold him was such, that she could hardly rest in the chaise till the postilion dismounted to knock for her admittance. How intense were her emotions during that brief space! How eagerly did her eyes run over every window

in the ample front of the house! How rapidly did the images of her uncle, and of Alexander Tod, his old and faithful servant, dance through her imagination, whilst she gazed intently on the yet unopened door, prepared to catch the first smile of surprise and of welcome, which she knew would illuminate the honest countenance of that tried domestic, the moment he should discover who it was that summoned him. As she looked, she was surprised to perceive that the door itself had strangely changed the modest and unpretending hue which it had worn when she last saw it, for a queer uncouth flaring colour, somewhat between a pink and an orange. Before she had time to wonder at this metamorphosis, the door did open, and if its opening did produce any surprise, it was her own, for, instead of discovering the plain but respectable figure of Alexander Tod, whom she had been long taught to consider more as an old friend than as a menial, she beheld a saucy fopling bepowdered underbred footman, in a gaudy vulgar looking livery. The man stared when she asked for her uncle, and seemed but half inclined to consent to the hall being encumbered with her baggage, and, after having shewn her with uncon-

cealed petulance into a little back parlour, she had the mortification, through the door which he had carelessly left ajar behind him, to hear herself thus announced.

"A young person in the back parlour who wishes to speak to you, sar."

And, chagrined as she was by this provoking delay, she could not help laughing, as she threw herself into a sofa to wait for her uncle's appearance. He came at last, and his joy at again beholding her was great and unfeigned.

"Welcome again to my house, my dear Chirsty," said he, with tears of joy, after his first warm and silent embraces were over; "Oh! why did you cease to write to me? But I need say no more, for what is done cannot be undone; yet, if you had but written to me, things might have been otherwise."

"I ought indeed to have written to you, my dear uncle," replied Chirsty; "but much as I have deserved your anger, things cannot be but well with me, whilst I am thus affectionately and kindly received by you."

Her uncle replied not; but, with his eyes thrown on the ground, and with an air of solemnity, which

she had never seen him wear before, he led her up stairs to the large drawing-room, where she found seated a middle-aged and rather good looking woman, with an expression of countenance by no means very prepossessing, and whose person was tawdry and very much overdressed. What was her astonishment, and what was the shock she felt, when her uncle led her up to this lady, saying,

"Mrs. Ross, this is my niece, of whom you have heard me speak so much; and Chirsty, my dear, you will henceforth know and treat this lady as my wife and your aunt."

However little sensible people may think of those new-born and baseless dreams, which have been recently blown up into something falsely resembling a science, by the folly and vanity of man, and which I for one yet hope, for the honour of human intellect, to see burst and collapse ere I die, it must be admitted, that all are more or less Lavaterists; and that even the youngest of us will involuntarily exercise some such scrutiny on the features of a countenance, when we happen to be placed in such circumstances as Chirsty Ross now found herself thrown into. She, poor girl, failed not to bring all

the little knowledge of this sort which she possessed into immediate requisition. The result of her investigations were most unfavourable to the subject of them, nor were these disagreeable impressions at all diminished by the profusion of protestations of kindness and affection, which the lady lavished upon her with a vulgar volubility, whilst at the same time she seemed to eye the young intruder in a manner that augured but little for her future happiness. But although Chirsty perceived all this, she inwardly determined to doubt the correctness of her own observation,—at all events, sorrowfully as she retired to rest, or rather to moisten her pillow with her tears, she failed not to arm herself with the virtuous resolution, that as this woman, be she what she might, was the wife of her uncle, who had acted as a father to her, she would use her best endeavours to gain her affection, seeing that she was now bound to regard her as a parent. But yet she did not close her eyes, without having almost unconsciously exclaimed,

"What *could* have induced my uncle, with such tastes as he has, to marry such a person as this? Ah! if I had not fooled away my time in Edinburgh! or if I had only *but* written!"

Next morning she met her uncle alone in the library, and a single sentence of his explained the whole.

"What *could* have induced you to forget to write to me, Chirsty?" said the good man, kissing her tenderly, whilst his eyes betrayed a sensation which he vainly tried to hide. "We were *so* happy here alone together! But I have been a fool, Chirsty! Blinded by momentary pique, I saw not the slough of despond into which I was plunging until too late! But she is not a bad woman, though not quite what I was at first led to believe her to be; and so, all we can now say is, that she is your aunt and my wife, and we are both bound to make the best of it."

Chirsty assured her uncle, that nothing should be wanting on her part towards her aunt; and she kept her word, for, neglecting all other things, she devoted herself entirely to the task of pleasing her. For some little while, her pious endeavours seemed to have succeeded; but it happened that Chirsty, unambitious as she was to shine, so far eclipsed her aunt in every attraction that makes woman charming, that without intending it, or rather whilst intending the very reverse, she monopolized all the

attention of those with whom they associated either at home or abroad. Compared to her Mrs. Ross was treated like a piece of furniture,—any table or cabinet in the room had more attention paid to it. She could not shut her eyes to her own inferiority, and envy, hatred, and malice took full possession of her. Chirsty's efforts to please, though they had ceased to be successful, were still unremitting; but her uninterrupted gentleness was met by perpetual peevishness and ill humour, always excepting such times as her uncle chanced to be present, when the lady's words and manner were ever bland, kind, and false. With such devilish tempers it often happens that the more they torture the more they hate, and so it was that the dislike of this woman towards her niece rapidly grew to so great a height, that she resolved to get her removed from the house.

Fondly believing that she had a stronger hold over her husband's affections than she really possessed, she first of all attempted to undermine her in her uncle's good opinion by sly insinuations against her truth, her temper, and what she called the girl's *pretended* love for him, which she declared was in reality no greater than her attention to her own

self interest required. But finding that this line of attack only excited his anger, she with great art gradually withdrew from it, and by slow degrees she began to confess that she now believed she had been altogether mistaken in her estimation of Chirsty, and every succeeding day heard her bestow more and more praise on her temper and disposition. This was a language that was much more congenial to the nabob, but he was not altogether the dupe of it. He however listened with seeming attention to his wife when she prosed on about the zeal she felt for her niece's interest, as well as when, after a long prologue, she finally proposed the grand scheme of sending Chirsty out to India to the care of a particular friend of the nabob's at Calcutta, that she might there make some wealthy match, so as to secure her a magnificent independence for life. Plainly as Mr. Ross saw through the motives that dictated all this apparent solicitude, he took care to appear to think it quite genuine. Nor did he refuse to entertain the project; for as he began shrewdly to suspect that his niece could now have but little happiness under the same roof with his wife, he resolved at least to put it in Chirsty's power to accept or reject this proposal. He accordingly sought for a pri-

vate interview with her, and then it was that her tears, and her half confessions with difficulty extracted, satisfied him of the correctness of his suspicions, and the readiness with which she acceded to the plan which he laid before her at once determined him as to the propriety of going immediately into it. He therefore lost not a moment in securing every thing that might contribute to her comfort and happiness during the voyage, and he presented her with a letter of credit for a sum of money amply sufficient to put her above all anxiety as to that matter on reaching the shores of the Ganges.

These substantial marks of her uncle's affection towards her, supported as they were by a thousand little nameless kindnesses, did not tend to allay the grief which she felt at parting with him. The reflection that she went because she felt convinced that her uncle's future domestic comfort required her absence, was all that she had to give her courage to bear it, and she was so much absorbed in this conviction, that she hardly gave much thought to the consideration of what her own future fate might be.

The gallant ship had gone merrily on its voyage for several days before Chirsty began to mix at all

with her fellow-passengers. But when she first came upon deck, it was like the appearance of the morning sun over the eastern horizon of some country where he is worshipped. All eyes were instantly bent upon her; and ere the people had been familiarized to her beauty, the elegance of her manners, and the charms of her conversation, soon made her the great centre of attraction to all who walked the quarter-deck. Above all others, she seemed to have made a deep and powerful impression on the commander, whom I shall call Captain Mordaunt, a very elegant and agreeable man, of superior intellect and information. He soon showed himself indefatigable in his attentions to her. His command of the ship gave him a thousand opportunities of manifesting a marked degree of politeness towards her, by doing her many little courteous services, which no one else had the power to perform. He easily invented means of keeping all other aspirants to her favour at a sufficient distance from her. Her heart was as yet her own; and as Mordaunt never lost any opportunity of engaging her in conversation, and as his talk was always well worth listening to, it was no wonder that so many unequivocal proofs of an at-

tachment on the part of so handsome a man, in the prime of life, and of address so superior, should have soon prepared the way for her favourable reception of his declared passion; and this having once been made, and mutually acknowledged, it seemed to grow in warmth as the days fled merrily away, and as the progress of the prosperous bark carried them nearer and nearer to that sun which gives life and heat to all animated nature. Often did Mordaunt gladden the artless mind of Chirsty Ross as they sat apart together on the poop of the vessel, towards the conclusion of their voyage, in the full enjoyment of the fanning sea-breeze, by the enchanting pictures which he painted of the happiness of their future wedded life.

"I have already realized a tolerable fortune," said he, one evening carelessly, "so that by the time I return to Calcutta from my trip to China, whither you know the vessel is bound, I may safely claim your hand, in order that we may sail home together as man and wife. You can have no dread of spending our honey-moon on the wide waters, my love, since they have yielded us so happy a courtship, especially when you think that we shall be on our way to some sweet rural resi-

dence in England, where we shall be insured the enjoyment of tranquillity and happiness for the rest of our days. And there, with what I have saved, added to the liberal allowance which your rich uncle will give you during his life, and with the certainty which you have of succeeding to his immense fortune at his death, we shall be able to live in a style altogether worthy of that exquisite beauty, and that angelic soul, with which Heaven has blessed you, and of those fascinating manners and brilliant accomplishments, which are calculated to make you the queen of any society you may be pleased to grace with your presence."

"Stay, stay, Mordaunt!" replied Chirsty, smiling playfully. "You are running too fast before the wind. I need not tell you what you have so often told me, that I am prepared to be thine on the wide ocean, in the populous city, or in the lonely desert, in sickness or in health, in wealth or in poverty! And well is it, indeed, that you have so often vowed all this much to me, for I must needs disabuse your mind of some part of its visions of riches, so far at least as that share may have reached which your fancy has ascribed to me. I have neither claims nor expectations from my uncle,

who has already done more for me than any niece in my circumstances had a right to expect."

"Haul taught that weather main-brace!" cried the captain, suddenly starting from her side; and although there appeared to be little change in the wind or the weather to warrant such activity, he became from that moment too much occupied in the care of the ship for any farther conversation with Chirsty that evening.

In the morning the lovers met as usual, and then, as well as during the few remaining days of the voyage, Mordaunt was as full of affection and endearment to her as ever. Their last private interview took place ere she left the ship to go into the small craft that was to take her up the river, and then all their mutual vows were solemnly repeated. An understanding took place between them, that their engagements should be kept private, unless circumstances should arise which might render a disclosure necessary. Poor Chirsty gave way to all the poignancy of that grief which she felt at being thus obliged to part, even for a few months, from him to whom, in the then orphan state of her soul, she had given up the whole strength of her undivided affections. But hard as

she found the effort to be, she was obliged to dry-up her tears, and even to throw a faint and fleeting smile over her countenance as she left the ship, that she might not betray her own secret before indifferent persons; and it was only that warm and cherishing hope that lay nearest to her heart, that kept the pulses of her life playing, and that enabled her to go through the trying scene of parting coolly with her lover, after he had deposited her under the roof of her uncle's friend, where they bid each other such a polite adieu, as might have befitted two well-bred people who were separating with mutual esteem for one another, and who were, at the same time, very little solicitous as to whether there did or did not exist any future chance of their ever meeting again.

Mr. Gardner, as I shall call the gentleman to whose protection the nabob had consigned Chirsty, well deserved the confidence which had been placed in him. He spoke warmly of the many obligations under which he lay to Mr. Ross, and he declared himself to be delighted in having the opportunity which had thus been afforded him of proving his gratitude for those obligations. His lady entered deeply into all her husband's feelings,

and both of them zealously occupied themselves in doing all in their power to promote the young lady's comfort and happiness. Numerous and brilliant were the parties which they made for the purpose of introducing their lovely protegé with sufficient eclat to the society of Calcutta. But not even the novelty and grandeur of eastern magnificence, though produced for her with all its splendour, had any effect in removing that pensive air which their young friend wore when she landed, and which she continued to wear notwithstanding all the smiling new faces to which she was every moment introduced. One very natural result, however, was soon produced by these numerous public appearances which the kindness of her friends obliged her to make. She was immediately encircled by crowds of admirers; and before she had been many months in the country, she had been put to the unpleasant necessity of declining proposals of marriage from numerous military men and civilians of rank so high, as to make those with whom she lived wonder at the indifference she displayed. The more she was courted, the more retiring she appeared to become.

Among the few who were admitted to a some-

what more familiar intercourse with Chirsty,' was a Scottish gentleman of good family, whom I shall call Charles Græme. Though young, he had risen to a high civil situation, and he had already realized a very handsome fortune. He was a gentleman of enlarged mind and extremely liberal education; and as he was of manners much more retiring than most of those with whom she had become acquainted,' she the more readily yielded to that intimacy which his greater friendship with her host and hostess gave him very frequent opportunities of forming with her. Like herself he was full of accomplishments; yet such was his modesty, that she had known him for a considerable time before accident led her to discover them. His mind was richly stored with the treasures of European literature; yet it was only on particular occasions that he allowed himself to give forth the sweets he had hoarded up, or to indulge in those critical remarks to which every one was prepared to listen with delight. As he became better known to her, and more at his ease with her, she discovered that his tastes, his acquirements, his sentiments, nay, his very soul, were all so much in harmony with her own, that she soon began to prefer his

society to that of any other gentleman who approached her. Had her heart been unengaged, she might perhaps have had some degree of palpitation in its pulses, as she sensibly felt their friendship becoming every day more and more familiar; but, as the partridge believes that when its head is in the bush the whole of its body is secure, so she, knowing her own safety, owing to that secret cause which bound her to another, never dreamed that the accomplished Scotsman could be in any danger of feeling for her any sentiment one degree warmer than that of esteem. Thus it was, that with perfect unconsciousness on her part, of the havock she was working in his heart, she read with him, criticised with him, played with him, sang with him, or sketched with him, as the fancy of the moment might dictate, her heart being all the while filled with gratitude to him, for so good-naturedly enabling her to pass with at least some degree of rational enjoyment, some of those tedious hours that must yet elapse ere the return of him to whom she had pledged her virgin affections.

As for Charles Græme, he soon began to find that he existed only when his soul was animated by her bright eyes and her seraphic voice. When

absent from their influence, he felt like a walking mass of frozen clay. Her society became more necessary to him than food or air. He almost lived at the house of the Gardners, who, on their part, gave him every encouragement, being secretly pleased at what they believed to be the mutual attachment that was so rapidly growing, as they thought, between two individuals whom they had reason to love so much, and whom they knew to be so worthy of each other, and so well calculated to make each other happy for life. Day after day the infatuated young man drank deeper and deeper draughts of the sweet intoxication of love. At last the hour of wretchedness came. Seizing what he fondly believed to be a favourable moment, and with a bosom full of bounding hopes, he laid open the state of his heart to the idol of his soul. The scales fell as if by magic from her mental vision.

"What have I done, Mr. Graeme," she cried, whilst her cheeks were suffused with blushes, and her whole frame trembled. "I have been blind! I have been thoughtless, most culpably thoughtless. Forgive me! oh, forgive me! but I cannot, I dare not, love you! I am already the pledged bride of another."

It would be vain for me to attempt to describe the kind of temporary death that fell upon her unfortunate lover, as she uttered these terrible words, which, like the simoom of the desert, left no atom of hope behind them. Sinking into a chair, he uttered no sound, and he sat for some time quite unconscious even of those attentions which her compassion for him at the moment led her unscrupulously to administer to him. The friendship and the high respect which she entertained for him, as well as a regard for her own justification in his eyes, forbade her to allow him to leave her, without a full explanation. It was given to him under the seal of secrecy, and the interview terminated with an agony of feeling and floods of tears upon his part, in which her compassion for that affliction which she had so innocently occasioned him, compelled her, in spite of herself, to participate.

The young Scotsman tried for some time after this, to frequent the house where she lived as he had done previously. But her smiles fell upon him like sunshine upon a spectre. Reason and prudence at last came to his aid; and seeing that his heart could never hope for ease, whilst he remained within reach of her attractions, he, to the

great astonishment and disappointment of his friends, made use of the powerful interest which he possessed to procure another situation in a distant station, and he tore himself away from Calcutta.

And now came the time of misery to poor Chirsty herself, the season of hope deferred, of nervous impatience, and of sad forebodings. The period for which her fond heart panted in secret arrived—it passed away. Days—nay, weeks and months beyond it elapsed; and yet no tidings came of the gallant vessel that bore her betrothed husband. Delicately alive to the apprehension of betraying her secret by inquiry, she did not dare to ask questions. Fears, agonizing fears, began to possess her, that some fatal calamity had befallen the ship, till, happening accidentally one day to cast her eyes over an old shipping list, she read, and her sight grew dim as she read, of its arrival from China, and its subsequent departure for England! How indestructible is hope! Even then she imagined it possible that all this might have been the result of accident, or might have arisen from the orders of superiors. But still her anxiety preyed terribly upon her mind, whilst she now looked for-

ward to the new period of the ship's return from England. In vain did she try to occupy herself in her former pursuits. In vain did her friends endeavour to interest her with the amusements they provided for her. All were equally fruitless in their efforts; and the only explanation which the Gardners could find for her mysterious abstraction, was in the belief that the remembrance of Charles Græme was not altogether indifferent to her; and thence they cherished the hope that the matter between that young man and her might yet one day end as they wished it to do.

Months rolled on, as if the days of which they were composed had been years, till Chirsty was one evening, with some difficulty, induced by her friends to go to a great public entertainment. She entered the room, leaning on Mrs Gardner's arm; and they were on their way to find a seat at the upper end of it, when her eyes suddenly beheld him for whose return she had been so long vainly sighing. Her heart beat as if it would have burst from its seat in her bosom. She clung unconsciously with a firmer hold to the arm of her friend, and her limbs tottered under her with nervous joy, as she moved forward. He was advanc-

ing slowly with a lady; and as he drew near, she held out her hand to him with a smile of happy and welcome recognition. He started at sight of her; and then, after scanning every feature of her countenance with calm indifference, he bowed coldly, turned aside, and moved away. Chirsty uttered a faint cry, swooned away, and was carried home by her friends in a state of insensibility, leaving the whole room in confusion.

Sufficient natural and ordinary reasons were very easily found by a company in such a climate as that of India for such an accident. But Mrs. Gardner had seen enough to convince her that some deeper and more powerful cause had operated upon Chirsty, than the mere heat of weather or the crowded state of a room; and after she had successfully used the necessary means for recovering her from her fainting fit, she insisted on being allowed to share confidentially in the secret of her afflictions. Chirsty felt some slight relief in telling her all; and strange it was, that she still clung most unaccountably to hope. He might not have recognised her at first. He would yet appear. But Mrs. Gardner's common sense told her there was no hope; and she judged that it would be far better that Chirsty should

receive conviction, however cruel that conviction might be, rather than remain in an anxiety which was so agonizing and destructive. A very little time enabled Mrs. Gardner to collect all the particulars of his treachery. To sum up all in one word,—he had arrived at Calcutta from England with a rich wife, with whom he had already sailed on his last voyage home.

This overwhelming intelligence was too much for the shattered frame of poor Chirsty Ross. She was attacked by a most alarming fever, which finally produced delirium; and even after the physicians had been able to master the bodily disease, the mental derangement continued so long unabated, that her friends the Gardners considered it proper to write home, to inform her uncle of her unhappy state.

It pleased God, however, to restore her at length to her right mind; and then it was that she was seized with an unconquerable desire of returning to England. The most that the Gardners could prevail upon her to agree to, was to delay her voyage to a period so far distant, as might ensure that fresh letters should reach her uncle, to inform him of her perfect mental recovery, and to teach him

to look for her arrival by a certain ship they named; and after impatiently waiting till the time destined for her departure arrived, she bade her kind friends the Gardners an affectionate farewell, and sailed with a fair wind for Britain.

Who was it that arrived a week afterwards at the house of Mr. and Mrs. Gardner in the middle of the night, having come by Dawk from a far distant province? It was the shadow of Charles Græme!

"Thank God! thank God!" cried he energetically, after being told of her recovery, and at the same time bursting into a flood of tears, which weakness and fatigue left him no power to restrain. "Thank God for her restoration! But oh! that I had reached Calcutta but eight days sooner!"

He took his determination, applied for leave, to which the state of his health might of itself well enough have entitled him, and went for England by the very first fleet that sailed.

Chirsty Ross had a prosperous, but not a happy voyage. Her bodily health improved every day that she was at sea; but her thoughts having full time to brood over her miseries, her spirits became

more and more sunk. She rallied a little when she beheld the English shore; and when she arrived in the river her heart began to beat with affectionate joy, at the prospect of again embracing her dear uncle. Even the image of her aunt had had its asperities softened down by length of time and absence; and she almost felt something resembling pleasure at the prospect of seeing her again. As the vessel arrived in the evening at her moorings, a boat came alongside, and a voice was heard to demand if there was a Miss Ross on board? Readily did Chirsty answer to the inquiry; and being told that it was her uncle's servant come to take her home, she lost not a moment in desiring her black maid to hand up a small box, containing a few things to be put into the boat; and leaving the girl to follow next day with her heavy baggage, she quickly descended the ladder. She was immediately accosted by a stout vulgar-looking man out of livery, who announced himself to her as Mr. Ross's servant, and informed her that a carriage waited for her near the landing-place. She did accordingly find a post-chaise there; but when the door of it was opened, and the steps were let down, she started back on per-

ceiving that there was a man seated at the farther side of it.

"Only a friend of Mr. Ross, Ma'am, whom he has sent to attend you home," said the fellow who held the handle of the carriage-door.

Surprised as she was at the vulgarity of the dress and appearance of the gentleman who was inside, and still more at his want of politeness in not coming out of the carriage to hand her into it, her heart was too full of home at the moment to admit of her inquiring very particularly into circumstances, and accordingly, without more ado, she entered the vehicle. But whilst she was yet only in the act of seating herself, the fellow who had passed himself as her uncle's servant, sprang in after her, pulled up the steps, shut the door, the side blinds were drawn up, and the post-chaise was instantly flying at the rate of twelve or fourteen miles an hour. She screamed aloud, but the ruffian hands of both the villains were immediately on her mouth, and silence was inculcated with the most horrible and blasphemous menaces.

"We must have none of your Indian fury here, mistress," said one of the fellows. "Behave peaceably and quietly, and you shall be treated

gently enough, but if you offer to rave and riot, the whip, the gag, and the strait-waistcoat shall be your portion."

"Merciful Providence!" said Chirsty Ross, "why am I thus treated, and whither would you carry me?"

"As to your treatment, young lady," said the man, "methinks you have no right to complain of that *as yet;* and as to the *why*, I should be as mad as yourself were I to hold any talk with you about *that;* and, then, as to the *whither*, you have been already told that you are going to your uncle's residence."

"Mad!" exclaimed Chirsty, with a shudder that ran through her whole frame. "But, ah! I see how it is. Mr. Gardner's letters have been received by my uncle, and not those which I wrote to him sometime afterwards. And yet how did he know to expect me in England, and by this particular ship, too, if my letters have not yet reached him. It is very puzzling—very perplexing—very distressing—but since I am going to him, I may thank God that all will soon be put to rights."

"Aye, aye," said both the men at once, whilst

they laughed rudely to one another, "all will soon be put to rights, I'll warrant me."

Chirsty sat silently dreaming over this strange and most vexatious occurrence, yet hoping that her misery would be but of short duration, till the chaise suddenly stopped, when one of the men let down the window, and called to the postilion to ring the great bell at a gate, which he had no sooner done, than the peal was answered by the fierce barking of a watch-dog.

"What place is this?" cried Chirsty, with new-born alarm. "This is not the house of my Uncle Ross."

"You will see that all in good time, ma'am," replied one of the men. "Post-boy, ring again. What are they all about, I wonder?"

At this second summons the huge nail-studded leaves of the ponderous oak and iron-bound gate were slowly rolled back, and the chaise was admitted into a large paved court, where the lights that were borne by one or two men of similar appearance to those who accompanied her, showed the plain front of a pretty considerable brick building, the narrow windows of which were strongly barred with iron. The door, too, was of the most mas-

sive strength, and the whole character of the edifice would of itself have conveyed to her the heart-sinking conviction, that she was within the precincts of a mad-house, even if those strange sounds of uncouth laughter, wild rage, and wailing despair that came from various parts of the interior, had been altogether unheard by her. Rapidly did her thoughts traverse her mind. The first natural impulse that possessed her, was a desire to scream out for help. But Chirsty was not destitute of resolution and self-command; and as she immediately reflected that nothing but the calmest behaviour could afford her any chance of convincing the people of such an establishment that she in reality was sane, she at once resolved to restrain herself from every thing that might look like excitement.

"Where is Sarah?" cried one of the men as he assisted Chirsty out of the vehicle. "Aye, aye, here she comes. Here is your charge, Sall.

"A tall, handsome young woman," said Sarah, surveying Chirsty from head to foot, whilst she herself exhibited a person in every respect the reverse of that which she was admiring, being almost a dwarf, though with a body thickly and strongly built. Her head was large, with harsh prominent

features, and her legs were bowed, and her arms long and uncouth looking. Round her waist, if waist that might be called where waist there was none, there was fastened a leathern belt, to which was appended a large bunch of great keys. In the eyes of Chirsty she was altogether a most formidable looking object.

"A tall, handsome young woman," said she. "In what sort of temper is she, I wonder?"

"She was a little bit riotous at first," said one of the men, "but she has been quiet enough ever since."

"Come this way, young lady," said Sarah to Chirsty, in a rough tone and sharp voice, and at the same time she stretched out her long arm, and grasped her wrist with her bony fingers, whilst with the other hand she held up an iron lamp, the light of which she threw before her.

"Treat me not harshly," said Chirsty gently. "I am ready to obey you. I am quite aware that, from the strange mistake that has occurred, it would be vain for me to attempt to convince you at present of my sanity. I must patiently submit, therefore, to whatever restraint you may impose on me, until my uncle comes to see me, and con-

vince himself. But do not, I pray you, exercise any unnecessary severity."

"No, no, poor thing," replied Sarah, "No, no—no severity that is not quite necessary, I promise you. As to your uncle—ha! ha! ha!—no doubt, you may chance to see un ere you leave this. Come this way."

Whilst this dialogue was passing, Chirsty was led by her strange conductress through some long passages, in which were several rectangular turnings, —past many strongly secured doors, from within which issued strange discordant sounds of human misery, mingled with the clanking of chains; and up one or two flights of stairs, which induced her to believe that the apartment to which she was about to be introduced was in the upper story, and in a wing of the building. The door was like those she had seen in her way thither, of immense strength, and it was secured by a powerful lock, a couple of heavy bolts, and a huge chain and padlock. It was the last door of the narrow passage, which terminated about a yard beyond it in a dead wall. The little woman pushed Chirsty past it into the *cul de sac* which the passage thus formed, and then quitting her arm, she planted the fixed

gaze of her formidable eye upon her, and placing the lamp on the ground, she selected the necessary keys, and using both hands she exerted her strength to undo the lock and padlock, and then drawing the bolts and removing the chain, she opened the den within. Beckoning to her charge with an air of command not to be misunderstood, she pushed Chirsty into the place, and then standing in the aperture of the half closed door for a minute or more, with her right hand on the key, she threw in the light of the lamp so as fully to show the whole interior. It was indeed a wretched place. A low narrow bed-stead, with bed-clothes of the coarsest and meanest description, was the whole of its furniture, and that occupied more than a fourth part of the space contained within its four brick and stone walls. The floor was of flags,—it had no fire-place, and one small narrow iron-grated window was all the visible perforation that could admit light or air.

"May I not be allowed to have the few things which came in my travelling-box?" said Chirsty mildly, after having seated herself on the side of the bed.

"We shall consider of that, young lady," said

Sarah sternly. "But in the meanwhile, to satisfy my mind that you may be safely left for a little time, you must suffer me to put those lily-white hands of yours into this glove;" and setting the lamp on the floor, she drew from her ample pocket a leathern bag, into which Chirsty patiently submitted to have both her hands thrust together, after which they were secured by a strap in such a manner as to leave them entirely useless.

"Let me see now that you have got nothing dangerous about you," said Sarah; and after searching her all over, and removing from her a pocket-book containing such small instruments as women generally use, together with one or two other articles, and not forgetting her purse, which she secreted carefully in her own bosom, she added, "I shall be back with you in the twinkling of an eye, for you must have food ere you go to rest, meanwhile, the quieter you are the better it will be for you;" and with these words she lifted the lamp and retired with it, locking and bolting the door with the utmost care.

It is needless for me to speculate as to what were Chirsty's thoughts, left as she was in the dark, as she listened to the retreating steps of her keeper

until a stillness reigned around her that was only interrupted at times by the distant baying of the watch-dog in the court-yard, or by some of those melancholy demonstrations of madness that came every now and then upon her ear, of different degrees of intensity, as they chanced to be modified by circumstances. Notwithstanding all the resolution which she had summoned to her support, she shuddered to think of the vexatious confinement to which she might be exposed ere her fond uncle might be able to gather courage enough to come to visit her in the melancholy state of mind in which he probably believed her to be. Whilst she was ruminating on such matters, she heard the returning footstep of Sarah.

"Here is some food for you," said her keeper, after opening the door and entering cautiously, "and, see, I have brought your night-clothes. I promised to use no needless severity; and if you continue to behave, you shall have no reason to complain of me. Let me help you to eat your supper; for this night you must be contented with simple bread and milk." And the first meal that poor Chirsty eat after returning to her native Britain, was doled out to her by spoonfuls from a por-

ringer by the long fingers of her dwarfish keeper, who, after making down her bed, assisted her into it, and then left her for the night.

And a strange night it was to her. Fatigue brought sleep upon her it is true, but there was no refreshment in it, for it was full of wild visions, and she started from time to time, and awaked to have her mind brought back to the full conviction of her distressing situation by the maniac laughter or howlings that broke at intervals upon the stillness around her. The only support she had in circumstances so trying was derived from religious meditations and aspirations, together with the hope which never forsook her, that her affectionate uncle might next day visit and relieve her.

FRESH LIGHT UPON THE SUBJECT.

GRANT.—Stop for one moment, Clifford, till we ring for fresh candles, or we shall be in darkness before you have uttered five sentences more.

DOMINIE.—Stay, sir, I'll run to the kitchen for them myself. Preserve me! the less time we keep Mr. Clifford's poor lassie in such misery the better.

Mr. Macpherson soon returned with the new lights, set them down on the table, and drawing in his chair, put his elbows upon his knees, placed his cheeks firmly in the palms of his hands, and sat with his eyes eagerly fixed upon Clifford's countenance, with the most ludicrous expression of earnestness. Clifford resumed as follows.

LEGEND OF CHIRSTY ROSS CONTINUED.

The morning's dawn brought back the returning footstep of Sarah. She brought with her Chirsty's travelling-box with most of the things it contained.

"See," said she, as she set down the box, "I have kept my word. So long as you behave, you shall find me disposed to treat you well. I know that you have been quiet all night, and, therefore, we shall try you for to-day with your hands unmuffled. But mind!" added the old woman with a fearful expression of eye,—"if you *should* change for the worse, there are worse punishments for you than this leathern glove."

"I thank you," said Chirsty, meekly; "I think you will have no occasion to resort to any such. I hope my uncle will be here to-day, and that a

few moments of conversation with him will satisfy him that you may be released from any farther trouble with me."

"Your uncle!" cried Sarah, with an uncouth laugh: "But we shall see.—Meanwhile, here comes water for you, and, by and bye, you shall have breakfast."

A little black-looking sharp eyed girl now entered with a pitcher, basins, and towels. Sarah stood by to watch how her charge conducted herself, and, when the toilet was completed, the bed was made up, and the things removed, and soon afterwards breakfast was brought her, together with a common fir chair, and a small table, and when she had finished her meal, she was again left to her own solitary meditations.

No sooner was all quiet, than Chirsty arose for the purpose of looking out of the window, that she might try at least to gain some knowledge of her position. She discovered that the walls of the building were extremely thick, that the window was powerfully barred with iron, and that a wooden shade projected over it from above, so as entirely to shut out any direct view outwards. By placing the chair near the window, however, and standing

upon it, she commanded a limited view downwards between the sole and the lower edge of the wooden projection, and from this she was enabled to satisfy herself, that her chamber was on one side of a narrow square court, for she saw the lower part of the buildings that inclosed the three other sides of it. Guessing from the windows that came within her view below, the court was surrounded with cells similar to her own, the startling fact now arose in her mind, that she had thus in one minute made herself as much acquainted with all the objects on which she could bring her eyes to bear from this her place of confinement, as she could do were she to occupy it for half a century. There was something chilling in the reflection, and her soul naturally began to pant in a tenfold degree for liberty. But that day passed away, and the next, and the next, and no kind uncle came to relieve her.

"Is there no message from my uncle?" said she, at last, as Sarah came to her one morning.

"None!" said the old woman, somewhat more gruffly than usual.

"I would fain write a letter to him," said Chirsty.

"I see no use in that," said Sarah, quitting the cell hastily, as if to avoid farther question.

She did not see the old woman again for several days. Nancy, the little girl already mentioned, attended on her at the usual hours. In vain she tried to prevail on her to procure her writing materials. Her answer was, that she had no means of doing so. She asked for books or work, but the girl's answer was the same. At length old Sarah appeared again.

"Any intelligence from my uncle, good Sarah?" said Chirsty.

"None!" replied her keeper, in the same tone she had used before.

"Then, I beseech you give me the means of communicating with him by letter," said she, earnestly.

"Tush, I tell you it would be of no use," replied Sarah.

"Nay, give me but pen, ink, and paper, and let me try," said Chirsty. "I am sure he would never allow me to be one moment here, if he could only see and converse with me. Oh! if I could but see him for five minutes, this harassing captivity would be at an end."

"Well, then!" said Sarah, after a silence of some moments, during which she appeared to be

weighing circumstances in her mind. "Well, then, you shall see un. But see how you behave! Follow me, then, and I shall bring you to your uncle."

"Oh, thank you, thank you! a thousand and a thousand times!" cried Chirsty, almost embracing the old woman in the height of her joy. "Depend upon it, I shall satisfy you as to my behaviour."

Sarah now opened the door of the cell, and Chirsty followed her. Even the small additional motion of her limbs, which she now enjoyed, was luxury to her, after the narrow bounds to which she had been confined. The old woman led her along the passage for a considerable way, down one flight of steps, along another passage, to the very end of it, and there she stopped opposite a door, secured by little more than the ordinary fastenings used to any private chamber. Sarah opened it, and desired Chirsty to enter. The light of Heaven was permitted to pass fully in at the window, and she rushed forward to meet her uncle's embrace. But ere she had gone two steps into the room, her eyes caught a spectacle that effectually arrested her.

"Merciful Providence, my poor uncle!" she faintly cried; and, tottering towards a pallet-bed that was near to her, she sank down on the side of it, and gazed with grief and with horror on the miserable object before her.

Seated in a wooden elbow chair, she did indeed behold her uncle; but he was there as a mere piece of animated clay. His hair, which always used to be so nicely trimmed and powdered, now hung in long white untamed locks over a countenance so yellow and emaciated as to be absolutely fearful to look upon. Part of it fell over the eyes, which were seen within it like two bits of yellow glass, motionless and void of all speculation. The under jaw hung forward and the tongue lolled out, as if all muscular power was lost. An old Indian dressing-gown, which Chirsty remembered to have been his pride, as having been presented to him by a great rajah, and as being made of the most valuable stuff that Cashmere could produce, but now begrimed by every species of filth, covered his person. A broad band of girth was passed around his breast, under his arms, and attached to the back of his chair, to prevent his weakness or his involuntary motions from precipitating him on

the floor. His feet were both occupied in drumming upon the ground, and his hands were extended before him, with the fingers continually crawling like reptiles on his knees, whilst he was ceaselessly emitting a low muttering whine, that never moulded itself into words. The very first glance she had of him, convinced Chirsty that her poor uncle was in the last stage of confirmed and hopeless idiocy.

"What would a letter have done, think ye, to such a clod as that 'ere?" demanded the unfeeling wretch Sarah, or what will you make of un, now you have seen un?"

"My poor unhappy uncle!" said Chirsty, starting from her seat and going fondly towards him, and weeping over him; "how sadly indeed hast thou been changed! When, alas! did this awful affliction fall upon him? But why has he been removed from his own comfortable home to such a place as this?"

"Such a place as this, quotha!" cried Sarah. "Why, what sort of a place would ye have un in? There is not a more comfortabler room in the whole house. And see, if I didn't bring down that 'ere old wardrobe, that we might have sum-

mat to hold un's things in; though I must say," added she, in an under tone, "that he hasn't much left now that's worth the caring for."

"But why has he been removed to such an establishment as this?" said Chirsty. "Surely, surely, his malady, helpless and unoffending as it has rendered him, could have given no disturbance in his own house, why then has he been torn from it? and how could his wife have agreed to treatment so cruel and so unnecessary?"

"His wife!" exclaimed Sarah with a laugh. "It was his wife who sent un here; and surely his wife has the most natral right to judge what's best for un."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Chirsty, "his wife! There must be some horrible villainy under all this."

"What!" exclaimed Sarah. "What is there horrible in a gay woman like her ridding her house of such a filthy slavering mummy as this? He would be a pretty ornament truly, to grace some of *the rich Mrs. Ross's splendid routes*, as I now and then see the papers call them. Besides, she pays well for his board here, and it is our interest not to let un die."

"Rich!" exclaimed Chirsty indignantly. "Her riches are my uncle's riches; and if one spark of Christian feeling yet remained in her bosom, she ought to have employed them in relieving, so far as they could relieve, this most heavy affliction of a just and wise Providence."

"It's not for me to stand argufying with you here, Miss," said Sarah, in a tone of displeasure that led Chirsty to fear a coming storm. "Come, you see you have gotten all the good out of un you can; so you may as well leave un and go quietly back to your cell."

"For the love of your Redeemer, and as you hope for mercy!" cried Chirsty, throwing herself on her knees before her keeper, "force me not to quit my uncle! To him I owe more than the duty of a child to a parent. Yield but to me the charitable boon of allowing me to watch by him, and to attend to him day and night, and you will render me so happy that I shall cheerfully and voluntarily submit to my present cruel confinement, without once inquiring by whose order it comes, or ever seeking to establish how unnecessarily it has been inflicted upon me. Oh! grant me but this, and may blessings be showered down upon you."

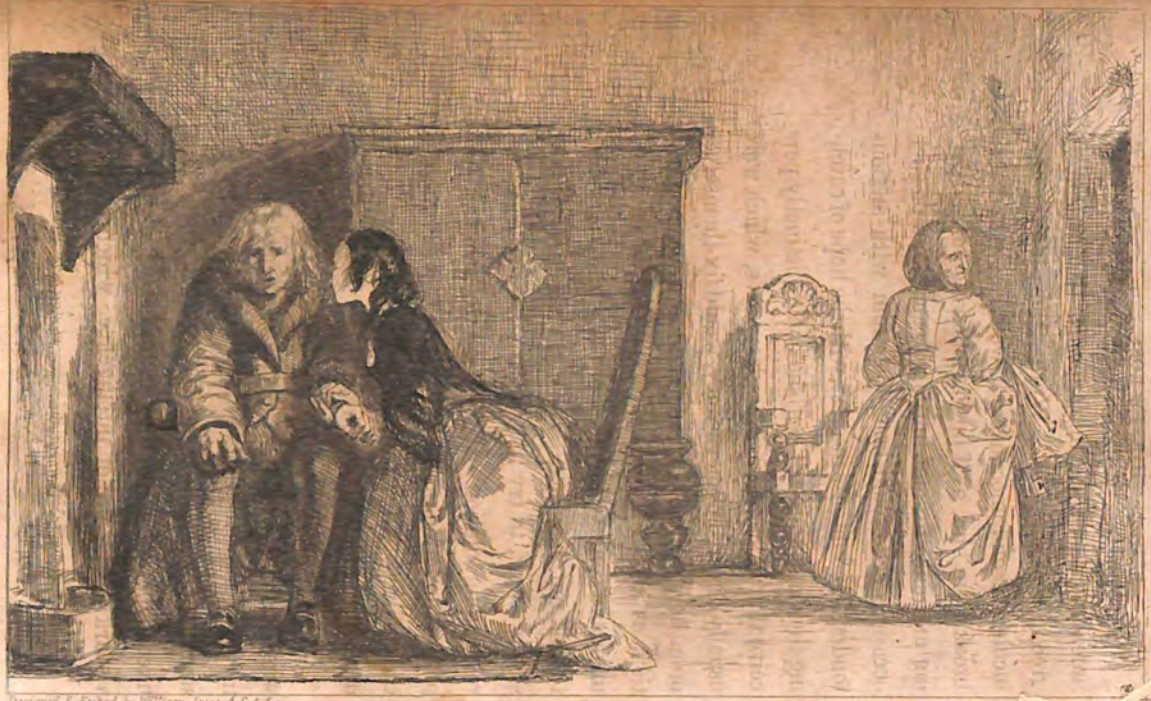
"I must think about it," gruffly replied Sarah. "In the meantime, you must back to your cell for this day at least. So bid un goodbye for this bout. We shall see how you behave, and we shall talk more of the matter to-morrow."

"Chirsty rose from her knees; and seeing that it was only through submissive obedience that she could hope to obtain what she so ardently wished, she went to her uncle, and taking up his unconscious hand, she kissed it, watered it with her tears, and then slowly left the apartment, and returned to her cell, where she was locked up as before.

She was no sooner left to herself, than so many circumstances and reflections occurred to her mind, that it had enough of occupation. She now remembered that after having had regular letters from her uncle for a considerable time, they had all at once ceased. But as the irregularity of Indian correspondence was even more common in those days, than it is now, she had regretted this as arising from unfortunate accident, without being very much surprised at it. But much as she had had reason to believe that her aunt was a heartless selfish woman, she never could have imagined

that she could have been guilty of conduct so unfeeling towards the unhappy man from whose affection she now derived all that wealth which it appeared she was spending so gaily. As to herself, a moment's thought was enough to convince her that she owed her present confinement more to the malice than to the care of her aunt. She remembered that the only communication from India that contained the intimation that she was about to return to Britain, as well as the name of the ship in which she was to sail, also conveyed the full assurance of the perfect restoration of her mind from its temporary malady. The person who knew to what ship to send for her on her arrival, therefore must necessarily have known that she required no such treatment as that to which she had been so wickedly subjected. Villainy of the darkest dye, therefore, had been at work against her; and where or how it might end she trembled to think. But the thought of her poor uncle's melancholy situation banished every other consideration from her mind; and all her thoughts and wishes were now concentrated in the desire she felt to stay by him, and to watch over him to the last. The very idea of such a self-devotion being

balm to her lacerated heart, as affording her the luxury of indulging that deep gratitude with which his unvarying kindness towards her had always filled her, and which she never hoped to have had any opportunity of repaying. She failed not, therefore, to employ all her meekness and all her eloquence to persuade Sarah to grant her request; and as the gentle drop by frequent repetition will at last wear through the hardest flint, so by repeated appeals to the best of the few feelings which that callous-hearted creature possessed, she at last succeeded in obtaining a limited permission to visit her uncle, which was extended by degrees so far, that she ultimately came to be allowed to go to his chamber in the morning, and to remain with him till he was laid to rest at night, when she was removed for the purpose of being locked up in her own cell. In this employment Chirsty forgot her confinement altogether, and weeks, months, nay even years rolled away with no other occupation but that and her devotions. There were times when she even flattered herself that the unremitting attention which she paid to him was not without some material advantage to his general state. She even thought she saw some



Designed & Etched by William Dyce A.S.A. &c.

CHIRSTY ROSS.

See page 179, Vol. II.

amendment, in a seeming approach to a certain degree of consciousness. Words, though altogether incoherent and unconnected, would now and then break from him, as if he was following out and giving utterance to some musing dream; and on such occasions she would hang over him with anxious fondness and intense interest, with the hope of catching their meaning. Then she could distinctly perceive that at such times his glassy eyes, which were usually directed upon vacancy, would fix themselves upon her, assume a strange and unwonted animation, as if the dormant spirit had arisen for a moment and come to the windows of its earthly house, to look out upon her,—but alas! when she turned slowly away, to try its powers, there was no corresponding motion of the head to maintain the proper direction and level of the eyes towards their object, and she would weep at the cruel failure of her hopes that followed.

It did happen, however, that one day whilst she was sitting by her uncle, earnestly engaged in trying such experiments as these, with the sunshine strong upon her face, his lack-lustre eyes being fixed in her direction, they seemed slowly to gather a spark of the fire of intelligence, which went on

gradually increasing like the light of dawn, till suddenly they received such an animating illumination as this earth does when the blessed orb of day bursts from behind a cloud; and as all nature then rejoices under the warm influence of his rays, so was the fond heart of his niece gladdened when, as she moved her face slowly from its position, and to this side and to that, the eyes of the nabob followed all her motions with a growing expression, that speedily began to spread itself with a faint glow over his hitherto frozen features. The lolling tongue retreated within the orifice of the mouth, the under jaw was drawn up, and the teeth were pressed together as if with the increasing earnestness of the gaze. His niece, with more than that degree of intensity of absorption of attention with which an alchemist might be supposed to have watched for the projection of the golden harvest of his hopes, seized a hand of her uncle in each of her's, and sat poring into his eyes, and over every feature of his face in breathless expectation.

"Chirsty Ross," said he, at length, slowly and distinctly, and in a manner that left no doubt that the words were not accidental.

"My dear, dear uncle, you know me then at

last!" cried the happy girl, warmly embracing him, and sobbing upon his bosom. "Thank God! thank God that you know me!"

"Chirsty," said the nabob again, "why did you not write to me sooner? Why was you silent for a whole winter? I have been rash, perhaps. But what is done cannot be undone, and we must e'en make the best of it now. Yet, if you had only but written to me Chirsty my love, things might have been different."

"Oh, this is too heart-rending!" cried his niece, yielding to an ungovernable paroxysm of grief.

"How could you forget to write to me, Chirsty?" continued her uncle. "The woman, to be sure, is not so bad a woman, after all—but you and I were so happy here alone together. But I have been a fool, Chirsty—yet she *is your aunt*, and my wife, so we must e'en submit, and make the best of it."

"Gracious Providence support me in this trying hour!" cried Chirsty, fervently.

"What!" cried the nabob, in a voice louder than she could have supposed his exhausted state could have admitted of. "What! is the ship to sail for Calcutta so soon? May the God of all

goodness be with you then Chirsty my love! Keep up your spirits, my sweet girl, you will come home to me soon with a husband and pagodas in plenty. But forget not to write often to me. Your failing in that has already worked evil enough to us both."

"Oh, my dear, dear uncle!" cried Chirsty, quite overpowered by her feelings, and sobbing audibly.

"Nay, cry not so bitterly, my dear child," said the nabob. "Trust me we shall meet again. And if we should not meet again here—if it should please God to remove me from this world ere you return, our sound Christian hope assures us, that we shall meet in another and a better. But, hold!" cried he, with a more than natural energy, that seemed to be produced by some sudden and great organic change in his system. "The anchor is up—quick, aboard, aboard! God for ever bless and guard you, my love! my Chirsty!—farewell! Ha! the gallant ship, see how her sails swell with the breeze!—she goes—she goes merrily. But—but—how comes this sudden darkness over me? She is gone!—all is gone!—gone!—go—o—oh!" and his words terminated in a long deep groan.

Chirsty hastily dried up her tears, and anxiously

scanned her uncle's face. His spirit had once more retreated from his glassy eyes—his face had again become deadly pale—his hands were cold, and their pulses had ceased. She shrieked aloud until help came, but it was too late—her uncle was dead.

Chirsty was no sooner made certain that all was over with her poor uncle, than her nervous feelings, which had been screwed up to the racking pitch by this trying scene, gave way, and she fell in a swoon, that terminated in a repetition of that feverish attack which she had had in India, upon which delirium supervened; and when, after a period of nearly three weeks, she was again sensible of the return of reason, she found herself lying in bed with her hands muffled, as they had been the first night she had slept in the asylum. She awaked from a long, tranquil, and refreshing sleep; and little Nancy, who was seated by her bedside, immediately ran off for Sarah, who came directly.

"Aye," said that hideous creature, after surveying her countenance attentively, "she seems quiet enough now. The fit has gone off for this bout."

"I have been very ill," said Chirsty, faintly, "but now, thank God, I am better."

"You have given me trouble enough i'facks," said Sarah. "But here is something that the doctor ordered you to drink, take this, and try to sleep again."

Chirsty readily swallowed what was given to her, fell asleep, and was soon well enough to quit her bed, and to be restored to that degree of freedom of person within her cell, that she had enjoyed before the discovery that her uncle was under the same roof with herself. She was even allowed to go down, once a-day, for an hour, attended by Sarah, to breathe the open air, and to walk backwards and forwards in the narrow well of a court, that was formed by that wing of the building which contained her cell. But this indulgence did little to relieve the insufferable tedium that seized upon her, now that the only object capable of interesting her had been removed. Her mind now recurred, with augmented force, to all the horrors of her iniquitous confinement. She resolved to try whether she could not move the compassion of her female Cerberus.

"Now that my uncle is gone," said she one day calmly to Sarah, "my confinement becomes so much more cruel and unnecessary, that I am sure

you must feel for me. You have now known enough of me during the long period I have been under your care, to be sufficiently aware that there never were any grounds for placing me in an asylum of this kind. If then I am shut up here for no other cause than that I may not give offence to Mrs. Ross by crossing her path, I am quite willing to give any security that may be asked of me that I will go down directly to live with my friends in Ross-shire, and that she shall never see or be troubled with me more."

"What!" exclaimed the wretch, who listened to her; "What!—and lose the good board which that worthy woman, your aunt, pays for you? No, no!—Enough that we have already lost that which she paid for that mummy of a husband of hers.—Yet, after all, he lived longer than one might have thought un like to have done. But you—an we but take care of you—you may long be a sure annual rent to us!"

"Can nothing move you?" said Chirsty, with a despairing look.

"No," said the wretch, with an iron grin. "I am not to be flattered from my trust. But what said you? No grounds for placing you here,

quotha! Was it not but the other day, that, strong as I am, it took all my power to hold ye down. Ha! ha! ha! The surest sign of madness is the belief that you are not mad."

"Then must my hope be in the Lord alone," said Chirsty, in a desponding tone. "But oh! if you would have me live, let me have books or work, or writing or drawing materials, or this painfully irksome confinement must soon kill me."

"No, no," said Sarah, shaking her head, "no, no. Writing or drawing materials might be used to send tales out beyond these walls, and books might be used as paper—aye, and work might answer the same end. Therefore content yourself, content yourself, child. I'll do all for you that such a feeling heart as mine can do for a poor fellow-creetur robbed of reason, as you have been. But I must fulfil the duty I am paid for."

It happened that the very next day after this, as Chirsty sat with her eyes cast down on the floor of her cell, some small glittering body attracted her notice, and on stooping to pick it up, to her great joy she discovered that it was a needle, which had probably dropped from the sleeve of little Nancy, who usually waited on her. She

secured the treasure about her person, as of infinite value, and the possession of it gave rise to a train of reflection that ended in the formation of a scheme for ultimately producing her liberation, which henceforward engrossed all her attention. Provided as she had thus so fortunately been with a needle, she was yet destitute of thread. But her necessity instantly made her think of using her long black hair, with which she resolved immediately to undertake the laborious task of embroidering the outline of her melancholy story on a cambric handkerchief, with the hope that some means might occur to her of thereby communicating the place of her confinement to her friends in Scotland. Eagerly did she sit down to begin the task, but she wept when she discovered, what she had not hitherto been aware of, that the first two or three hairs which she pulled were of a white as pure as that of the handkerchief which was to be the field of her work. Her miseries, however, had not as yet done all the work of age upon her raven tresses; for, enough still remained of a silken and glossy jet to have embroidered a whole volume. Such were her feelings at the time, however, that, dreading the change that might yet take place, she

knew not how quickly, she rent forth such a quantity of the precious material as might, at least, secure the completion of her purpose, and having carefully secreted it, she went to work with an eagerness that seemed to promise to lend her a new existence; and, indeed, the occupation and the hope it yielded her, kept her up under all her afflictions for the months and months that elapsed ere she stealthily brought her work to a conclusion.

And after it was finished her heart sank within her, for occupation was at an end, and now her dread arose that the work would be fruitless; for where was the hope, in her circumstances, that she might ever find a messenger fit to be entrusted with such a charge. Whilst employed in the work, her mind was tranquillized. But now it was thrown into a state of continued nervous excitement, which could not but have a tendency to wear it out. It did happen that, in her way down by the various passages and stairs that led to the little court whither she was daily summoned for exercise, she sometimes, though very rarely, met with strangers passing upwards to visit some unfortunate friend or relative. With none of these dared she to have communicated verbally; and if

she had so dared, a word from her stern keeper to strangers in such a place, would have turned the most sober expression of perfect sanity into the semblance of the mere utterance of hopeless madness. But if she could in any way manage to put her embroidered history into feeling and charitable hands, she trusted that the curiosity at least of the individual might save it from being either exposed or destroyed, and if so, hope might be interwoven with its living threads. Each time that her cell was opened, therefore, to allow her to descend to the little court, her heart beat high. But, alas! day after day, and week after week, passed away, and no one came at the fortunate minute.

At length, as she was one day descending one of the flights of stairs, with Sarah close behind her, she met with an old gentleman having a particular lameness in one leg, who was limping up with a crutch. He stood aside to allow her to pass, and the pity, not unmingled with admiration, that seemed to animate his face as he earnestly looked upon her, made her almost accuse herself of folly for not having boldly risked the venture of putting the handkerchief into his hands. But a little thought told her, that, if she had done so, all her labour

and all her hopes would have been utterly wrecked, —for she remembered that the keen eyes of Sarah had been close at her elbow, and detection would have been certain. Several other individuals passed her at different times, but the countenance of none of them gave her sufficient confidence to trust them, even if an opportunity had been afforded her, and every day her nervous excitement and irritability grew more and more distressing.

It happened one day, however, that as she was moving along a passage, she heard and recognised the particular *stump* of the lame gentleman whom she had formerly met. She could not be mistaken, —and it was then entering on the lowest step of a flight, down which she was about to turn. She was then a pace or two ahead of Sarah, and contriving to lengthen her stride as she approached the turn at the stairs, she passed a keeper who was hurrying on to open the various locks of a cell which the stranger he was conducting was about to visit. Thus it was that, by fortunate accident, she was brought alone and unseen into contact with the gentleman for a few brief but precious moments. Nerved up by the importance of the act, she expanded her handkerchief before him, to shew what

it contained,—put it into his hand,—and with an imploring look that spoke volumes, she signed to him to conceal it, and as she passed him by, she quickly whispered him:

"Hide it now!—read it at home—and, oh! for mercy's sake, act upon it."

Taken thus by surprise, the stranger held it for a moment in his hand, and turned to look after her who gave it him. Sarah appeared whilst he was still standing thus. Chirsty stood on the lowest step, and looked up to him in breathless and motionless dread.

"What stand ye there for?" cried Sarah roughly to her, as she was descending.

The stranger seemed to recover his self-possession—He quietly returned the salutation which Sarah gave him, and wiping his face with the handkerchief, as if it had been his own, pulled forth for that purpose, he thrust it deep into his bosom, and began again to climb the steps.—Chirsty, overpowered by her feelings, leaned for a moment against the wall.

"What's the matter with ye?" cried Sarah, impatiently.

"Nothing, nothing, good Sarah!" said Chirsty,

" only a sudden qualm of sickness, but it has gone off now ;" and so saying, she pursued her way with tottering steps.

If Chirsty was subjected to anxious excitement before she had thus disposed of her broidered history, how much greater were her nervous agitations, her eternal tossings between hope and fear, from the moment she had thus committed it to the stranger? Had he betrayed her? nay, if he had, she must have heard of it from Sarah, or gathered it from the harsher treatment with which she must have been visited. He must have been so far her friend. But, admitting all this, whether he would have charity enough to act upon his knowledge of the facts it contained, or whether he would treat it as the mere pseudo-rational statement of a maniac, were matters of doubt, that agonized her by night as well as by day. She slept not,—she ate not, and her brain grew lighter and lighter every day. She became sensible of this. A most unconquerable dread came upon her, that even admitting that the stranger was doing all he could to inform her friends of her unhappy situation, her senses would be undermined before they could come to her relief, and, as time

wore on, and hope grew fainter and duller, she began to yield herself up to despair, which gradually threw its damp and suffocating clouds over her soul.

Whilst she was in this gloomy state, she happened one day to think of the needle, which she had now so much reason to fear had been but uselessly employed; and the horrible idea crossed her mind, that even such a small instrument as it might readily enough produce death, and that thus there was yet another and a more certain way in which it might be made to effect her deliverance from her present imprisonment. She immediately drew it forth from the skirt of her gown, where she had concealed it. She looked at it for some moments with a steady but agitated gaze; and then, earnestly imploring Heaven for aid in the fearful struggle she was undergoing, she started up, with a resolution acquired from above, and threw it from the window of her cell, that such wicked thoughts of self-destruction might never again be produced by it; and then, on her knees, she poured out her humble and submissive aspirations of thanks.

And now despondency gave way to resolution,

and she at length determined to take the first opportunity of making a desperate attempt to effect her escape. But to produce even a hope of success, she saw that it would be necessary to use much preliminary artifice.

It was the more easy for her to employ this effectually, that hope had hitherto made her behaviour so mild and so submissive, that all suspicion on the part of her Argus-eyed keeper had been for a long time put to rest. Recollecting what Sarah had said to her as to the important source of revenue which hung on the preservation of her life, she began by complaining of that for which she had, indeed, no inconsiderable grounds of truth, that her health was suffering deeply from want of pure air and exercise. This was touching Sarah in the very point where she was most assailable. She, of herself, proposed to extend Chirsty's walk to a garden belonging to the place, to the existence of which she had more than once heard her refer. Next day, accordingly, she was taken from her cell, and conducted by Sarah and Nancy down through the same passages, and by the same flights of stairs with which she was already so familiar; but instead of being led into the small court

which had hitherto been the utmost extent to which freedom had been permitted her, she was ushered into a large and highwalled orchard or garden, quite umbrageous with fruit-trees, and thickly intermixed with shrubs. Who can fancy, with any approach to the reality, the delight which Chirsty felt whilst wandering among the blossoming shades of this, to her absolutely, celestial spot, after the years of confinement which she had undergone? She leaped—she skipped—she threw her arms about, and laughed as if she had really been the poor unsettled maniac who might have required the restraint she had been so long kept under. She poured out her thanks to Sarah with strange volubility; and as she was guilty of no excess that could alarm her keeper, she was not only readily permitted to remain there for a considerable time under her watchful eye, but she was returned to her cell with a promise, that she should be permitted to revisit the garden daily.

The effect of this leniency and indulgence was a renovated state of health, perfectly wonderful in itself, and highly gratifying to Sarah. But although the spirits of the patient rose from the blessed influence of a more frequent intercourse

with the sun and the sky, her anxious mind was still deeply possessed with the sad conviction that every day made the hope of help from her friends in Scotland less and less probable. Her determination to attempt an escape, therefore, strengthened with the improvement and increase of her physical energies. She never made the round of the garden, without scanning every part of its inclosure with scrupulous care. In the course of this daily examination, she one day discovered that a half-witted lad; employed in nailing up the fruit trees, had carelessly left his light hand-ladder leaning against the wall, in a corner, where it was in a certain degree hid by a buttress, and as she saw it in the same spot the next day, she became satisfied that it was for the present unwanted and forgotten. The very thought of this, as a means for getting over the wall, brought her ingenuity into play; and as she at once saw that any attempt at escape in broad daylight must necessarily be unsuccessful, she began to work upon her keeper to procure a change of the mid-day hour of airing to that of evening. As the garden was used at all times of the day as a place of exercise for the less violent patients, she occasionally encountered them during her walks.

She therefore pretended to be seized with an unconquerable alarm at their uncouth appearance, and she declared that it was impossible for her longer to avail herself of the privilege which she enjoyed.

"I feel all your kindness to me, unfortunate creature that I am;" said she, in a tone of despondency, to Sarah, one day, when she came as usual to take her out. "But I cannot bear to have my path crossed by those melancholy objects; and, since it is Heaven's will that I am so condemned to misery in this world, the sooner I am relieved by death, and dismissed to a happier, the better."

"No, no," said Sarah, who was fully alive to the important improvement of Chirsty's health, from the change of system already pursued with her. "We must not let ye die,—we can't afford that,—so walk out you shall. And, since you are frightened by the sight of them 'ere creeturs, we shall walk in the cool of the evening, when they are all locked up."

"Thank you, thank you, Sarah," said Chirsty, overjoyed at the success of this first part of her scheme.

Anxiously did Chirsty look every evening as she returned to the garden to ascertain whether the ladder was still in its place, for she was obliged to allow one or two nights to pass that she might use certain management with Sarah to ensure something like a probability of success. Under pretence of giving greater exercise to her limbs, she began to jump and dance with Nancy. Some time afterwards she proposed to play a game of hide and seek with her. These sports were renewed for several evenings, so that Sarah was not only lulled into perfect security, but, hard as she was by nature, she was even so much amused by the merriment of the little girl, who was her niece, that Chirsty easily contrived that each successive evening should prolong their sports, until she one night succeeded in remaining in the garden till twilight had almost become darkness. Then it was that she wound up all her energies to make her attempt.

"Well, well," said she carelessly, "I am almost tired now, Nancy; but come, I will give you one chance more;"—and off she went by way of hiding again among the bushes.

But no sooner was she out of sight, than forcing her way through the thicket, she darted down a

long alley with the speed of a hare, mounted the ladder to the top of the wall, drew it up after her, and letting it down on the other side, she was beyond the hated precincts of the asylum before Sarah or the little Nancy had begun to suspect that she was gone. Already did her hopes bound over all intermediate obstacles, and transport her in imagination to her father's humble dwelling at Tain. Finding herself in a lane, with the garden wall on one hand, and another equally high on the opposite side, she sprang forward without knowing whither she went. Loud screams and shouts came from within the garden. On she ran wildly until she was terror-struck for a moment, arrested, and by hearing cries of alarm, and beholding the flaring of lights in the very direction in which she was running. The loud baying of the great dog also reached her ears from the same quarter. Winged by fear, she was thus forced to double back, and bethinking her of the ladder, she rapidly retraced her steps to the spot where she had left it. Taking it hastily down from the garden wall, she dragged it across the lane with the intention of applying it to that on the other side. Whilst her trembling hands were in the act of doing this, the harsh iron

screams of Sarah came all of a sudden loudly up the lane from the opposite direction to that in which Chirsty had first attempted to fly. A postern-door of the garden had given the old woman egress at about fifty yards below. Dreadful was now the nervous agitation of poor Chirsty. Her utmost strength was necessary to rear the ladder, light as it was, against the wall. She did succeed, however. Her enraged and baffled keeper was toiling up to her with her wide mouth, uttering shrieks and imprecations that might have well been called infernal. Chirsty climbed the ladder with a palsy in all her joints. She was already on the top of the wall, —one moment more would have enabled her to pull the ladder up beyond the reach of the infuriated dwarf, and she had succeeded in raising it a considerable way from the ground, when the uncouth monster reached the spot, and clutching at the lower end of it with her long hands, she with one powerful jerk, not only dragged it down, but she so destroyed the equilibrium of the unfortunate fugitive, that she fell from the top of the wall into the lane, where the hideous countenance and demoniac eyes of Sarah frowned and glared over her, and the horrible laugh of triumph, and the blasphe-

mous denunciations of vengeance and punishment which the monster uttered, rang in her ears ere she was borne off senseless to the asylum.

You are doubtless desirous to know something of the history of poor Charles Græme, who, as you may remember, left India for the purpose of following Chirsty Ross to England? I shall shortly tell you, that on reaching Britain, he made ineffectual inquiries for her at her uncle's residence. Mrs. Ross denied having ever seen or heard of her. He did find out her Indian maid; but from the little that she told him, he could make out no clue to lead to the discovery of her mistress. And after many ineffectual attempts, repeatedly made for months, he at length yielded to the advice of his friends, and returned to India, where he vainly endeavoured to eradicate the sorrow of his heart by fresh and intense occupation.

After the lapse of a good many years, accident led a gentleman to visit a noble friend of his, who was proprietor of a fine estate and residence in Ross-shire. The roads thereabouts were then so bad for wheeled carriages, that, tired of the slowness of his progress and of the jolting of his vehicle, he left it at an inn, to come after him at its own

rate by a somewhat circuitous route, and mounting his servant's horse, he set off unattended. Following the directions he received from the people of the house, he took what was called the shortest way, hoping that he might yet save his distance so far as to reach his friend's house to a late dinner. Many was the long Scottish mile of ground which he travelled over, however; and still as he interrogated the peasants whom he met with, he found that the way before him seemed rather to be lengthening than diminishing. His horse began to manifest great symptoms of fatigue, and as the night was settling down very fast, he was glad to meet with a man who pointed out to him a track leading by the sea-shore, which, as he assured him, would save him several miles of distance. At the same time he told him, that he would require to push on smartly, so as to reach a certain ford at the mouth of a river, before the flowing tide should render it quite impracticable. Stimulated by this information, and being, moreover, impatient to get to his journey's end, he put spurs to his horse and galloped on as fast as the tired animal could go.

He had not proceeded very far, when a vivid flash of forked lightning blazed amid the obscurity

that brooded over the sea, and a tremendous peal of thunder rent the air. The waves, which were gradually rising upon the beach, seemed every moment to swell more proudly, and to toss their snowy crests higher, and suddenly a deluge of rain began to be poured from the gathered clouds. The somewhat delicate traveller wished himself again within his old box of a carriage in defiance of its jolting, but now, both in mercy to himself and to the animal he rode, he was compelled to force the poor creature on to an accelerated pace, that they might the sooner reach some place of shelter. As if fully aware of the necessity of exertion, his horse bore him with tolerable rapidity for two or three miles amidst the lightning and rain, and the thunder that at times deafened the sound of the advancing waves, till, as the darkness was just about to become complete, he dimly descried the huge mass of an ancient building rising before him from a low peninsula; and, on further investigation, he discovered that he had reached the river of which the peasant had spoken. A very cursory examination only was necessary to assure him that the stream was already so swollen by the rain and the tide as to take away all hope of his

being able to ford. The river was a raging torrent, and the roar of its conflict with the swelling tide, was a terrific addition to the horrors of the storm. The gentleman had no alternative left, therefore, but to look for hospitality in the adjoining building.

Having dismounted then, he led his horse in at a gateway; and, having discovered a dilapidated out-house, with a half entire roof, he contrived to fasten the animal by the bridle to a rusty iron hook that projected out of the wall. He then made his way across a court-yard so covered with tall docks and nettles as very much to discourage any hope which he might have previously entertained of finding inhabitants within the edifice; but, as he groped his way towards the great door of the huge pile, he was cheered by beholding a light that glimmered through the unglazed and broken casements of what appeared to be a large apartment about two stories up, whence he distinctly heard the singing of a woman's voice. Somewhat encouraged by this circumstance, and guided by the faint gleam, he tried the ponderous old oaken door, but he found that it was firmly secured within. He was about to apply his hand

to a large rusty iron knocker that hung upon it, when his attention was arrested by a wild laugh which echoed through the apartments above, died away, and was again more than once repeated with strange, sudden, and incomprehensible changes. Some of those superstitious feelings of which his infancy had largely partaken, for a moment seized upon him, and he doubted whether the building was not tenanted by beings with whom those of this world could not dare to have intercourse. But a little thought, and a little more attention to the voice, soon reassured him against any thing supernatural, and he then began to question himself whether he might not be about to rouse some body of lawless banditti or smugglers who might have taken possession of that which was evidently a ruined castle, as a place for their retreat or rendezvous. Was it prudent to proceed? But he was a man who never feared danger in youth; and, now that youth was long past with him, certain bitter disappointments he had met with in early life, and the consequent sorrow which his heart had ever since endured, rendered him now much too careless about mere existence ever to allow any anxiety regarding that

to influence his conduct, even if the deluge of rain which was then falling had not been enough to stimulate the faintest heart to the bold determination of making good an entrance at all hazards. Raising the knocker, therefore, he made a furious appeal to those within. But whether it was that the roar of the thunder, the rumbling of the river, the booming of the waves, and the continued plash of the rain, combined to drown his efforts, or to render the inmates deaf to his summons, he found it necessary to repeat his loud larum several times ere his ear caught the sound of a step descending the stair from above.

The stair was included in one of those curious thin round towers which are so frequently seen rising from the side of the doorway of these old Scottish castles, and a small window about half a story up seemed to have been placed there to enable the appearance of all applicants for entrance to be well reconnoitred before admission should be granted to them, whilst a small round arrow or musket hole on a level with their heads, enabled them to be easily and successfully assailed from below, if they were likely to be at all troublesome. A flaring light streamed suddenly out from the small

window above, and threw a partial and fitful gleam over a part of the dripping weeds of the wet court-yard. It proceeded from a lighted torch of bog-fir, and the stranger's attention was instantly arrested by the apparition that brandished it aloft with a bare extended arm. It was a woman, whose countenance, though wasted, and tarnished, and rendered wiry as it were, by exposure to weather, yet exhibited features of the noblest character, so that even a momentary glance at them and the dark eyes that flashed from them with a wild expression, as the torch which she held forth threw back its flickering light upon them, convinced the stranger that they must have been once beautiful.

"Who comes at this unseasonable hour to these my castle gates?" demanded the woman, in a haughty tone.

"A single traveller overtaken by night and by this pelting rain," replied the stranger, "from which, with your kind permission, he would fain find a temporary shelter."

"Aha!" exclaimed the woman again, with a curious expression of extreme and cunning caution, "dost think that these gates of mine ever turn upon their hinges to admit any guests but those who

come in their gilt coaches,—aye, and with their running footmen and out-riders too?"

"I doubt not what you say," replied the stranger; "but I am at this moment acting the part of my own out-rider; I left my carriage to go by another road, whilst I came on this way on horseback. Pray, good madam, send down one of your people, and his inspection of my horse, which I have used the freedom to tie up in your stable, will no doubt satisfy you."

"My people! ha! ha! ha!" exclaimed she laughing wildly, "you look to be a gentleman, though, Heaven knows, looks are never to be trusted in this deceitful world. But I will see you nearer,"—and having disappeared from the window, he heard her step descending the lower flight of the stair. After a few moments of a pause, the heavy bolts were withdrawn, and the door was slowly opened to about one-third of its extent. Although prepared to behold something rather extraordinary, the gentleman was absolutely startled by the appearance of the woman who now stood before him. He had already seen her countenance, but now he could perceive that her hair was exceedingly long and untamed, and whilst the greater

part of it was white or grizzled, as if from premature failure, it still contained what, if properly dressed, might have been called tresses of the most beautiful glossy black, and the strange effect of this unnatural intermixture of the livery of youth and of age, was heightened by the wild combination of such fantastical wreaths of heather and sea-weed, mingled with sea-birds' feathers, as insanity is usually so fond of adopting by way of finery. Her arms were bare to the shoulders, and her bust was but imperfectly covered by a coarse canvass shirt. A red flannel petticoat that descended to her knees, and which was confined at the waist by a broad leathern belt, was the only other piece of drapery that she wore. She stood before the stranger exhibiting the wrecks of a form of the most exquisite mould, and her whole appearance betraying the fact, that whatever the soul that animated it might have once been, its reason was now obscured by the darkness arising from confirmed derangement.

"Enter my castle, sweet sir!" said the maniac in a gentle and subdued voice, and at the same time curtsying with a grace which might have better befitted the attire of a court than that which she wore. "Enter my castle, and I will speedily

usher you up to the grand banqueting-room. But stay," added she with a sudden and wild change of manner, after he had obeyed her invitation, "I must make my gates secure against the wretches, they might find me out even here. Bolt!—bolt! —bolt!—there my brave bolts," she continued, changing her speech into a chant, as if addressing them in incantation,—

"Keep your wards,
Be faithful guards,—
And you master-key,
Great warden shall be;
To defend me from force and from traitorie.

Come along, sir," continued she, again changing to a wild mood; "this way—I have a pride and a pleasure in personally attending on so distinguished a guest, as your whole appearance and manners declare you to be."

The gentleman followed his conductress up the half-ruined screw stair, which here and there exhibited fearful chasms, from the entire absence of two or three successive steps, over which she skipped without the least hesitation, whilst he was obliged to thrust his nails into the crevices of the wall to hoist himself over the difficulty. But after he had ascended two flights, he came to a landing-place

where there was a door-way entering into that large hall, from which he had first heard the voice of the maniac. Into this she led the way, and as he was about to follow her, you may imagine his astonishment when I tell you he discovered that the whole flooring was gone except the bare oaken beams, and the apartments below being in the same state, his eyes stretched uninterruptedly downwards till vision was lost in the impenetrable darkness of the dungeons below. But his conductress hesitated not a moment, and went onwards from beam to beam, with as much indifference as she would have walked across a paved court, until she gained the great hearth, which, with a small portion of the planking in its vicinity, was still entire, and where a fire of wood was burning under the huge projecting chimney.

"Come, sir," said the maniac, smiling courteously, "never mind your wet boots; don't stand upon ceremony I pray you,—your long ride and the state of the weather are sufficient apologies. Here is a seat by the fire for you."

She then busied herself in placing an old rotten-looking chair, which appeared to have once had a back, and which seemed to have belonged to the

castle in its better days, whilst she seated herself on an opposite stool, and began to arrange her head-gear, to run her taper fingers, with nails on them like eagle's talons, through her long hair, and to twist it round into certain curls that had now probably become natural from the art and care which had once been bestowed upon them. Meanwhile the stranger, after bracing up his nerves and steadying his head, and balancing his person, with some difficulty and hazard accomplished the perilous passage.

"You must be hungry, sir, after your ride," said the maniac, in the same mild tone. "I was about to sup when you came in. Perhaps you will have no objections to join me." And then suddenly changing in her tone, and bursting into an uncouth laugh, as she looked into a pot that hung simmering over the fire—"ha!—ha!—ha!—hah!—see!—the water has boiled well. The lightening has helped to do that for me. I am the favoured one! The very elements are my cooks! Hah! did you see where it came again? flash—zigzag—zigzag. Now 'tis time to mix the pudding," and, thrusting her hand into a large square hole in the wall, she dragged out, first a bag of oatmeal, and then a small wooden

vessel full of salt, and with an earnestness which for the time absorbed her attention from every thing else, she proceeded to put the ingredients into the pot, and to stir them about with a large wooden spoon.

"Now for my silver dish!" said she again, as she pulled forth a pewter basin from the same recess in the wall. "Well is it for me that my gates are watched and warded, else would robbers soon carry off this rare treasure of my castle. See here now—ha! ha! ha! let us begin the feast." And as she said so, she filled the pewter basin from the pot, by means of the wooden spoon, and set it between them on an old box turned upside down, and drawing forth a couple of pewter spoons from her curious cupboard, she handed one to the stranger.

"Hah!" said she sternly, as she broke into a more violent state of excitement than she had hitherto exhibited, "do you see that mark?" And as she said this, she drew with her forefinger a line of division across the surface of the mess that stood between them—"That's your half and this is mine; so take care what you do, for I'll have no foul play—men *can* cheat!—but I'm hungry,

and I must have my food; so see to it that you eat no more than what is your own."

The mind of the traveller was too much filled with this strange and distressing scene to admit of his appetite leading him to infringe on the rule thus prescribed to him, even if the food itself had been much more inviting than it really was; on the contrary, he had hardly eat a third part of his way up to the boundary line, when he found that his hostess had scrupulously given it a straight edge upon her side.

"Come!" said she, in an angry tone of voice, quite different from any she had hitherto used; "eat up your share! do you think I want it? Come—there is no poison in it. Come! come!"

"I do, I do," said the gentleman, pretending to eat; and every now and then contriving to throw unobserved a large spoonful down between the beams; until, partly by eating, and partly by this occasional manœuvre, he at last succeeded in emptying the dish.

"Now, sir!" said the maniac, resuming all the quiet and decorous demeanour of a well-bred woman, "a little gentle exercise after supper con-

duces to good repose. I shall be happy to give you my hand for a minuet."

Pushing back the seats they had occupied, she seized the stranger's hand, and took her position beside him on the hearth. He offered no opposition to her proposal; and she immediately began to sing with great brilliancy and effect that minuet so well known to our grandsires and grandmothers under the name of the *Minuet de la Cour*. Following the example of his entertainer, the gentleman was obliged to make his preliminary bows corresponding to her preliminary courtesies; and had any eye looked upon the couple as they were thus employed, it might have been naturally enough supposed that he danced with some handsome lady of quality, disguised in a fancy dress, so perfectly did the grace of her attitudes assimilate themselves to the various movements of the minuet. But the gentleman had not altogether calculated the nature of his present undertaking. The spot of terra firma on which the dance commenced was by no means large enough for the extent of one-tenth part of the figure of the minuet; and a less bold man than he would have felt anything but tranquillity of mind, when his insane partner,

giving him her hand, glided with him over the beams, amidst the half light that proceeded from the decaying embers, like some spirit from the other world. But if this was alarming, what were his feelings, when, after the slow part of the minuet was over, she began to carol the sprightly gavot which follows it, with a clear voice, that made the lofty vaulted roof ring again, whilst she darted off and called to him to follow. So indeed he found himself compelled to do; but whilst he, at the risk of his life, contented himself with keeping up something like a semblance of the figure, he was astonished and appalled to see his partner go through the whole dance with all that activity which might have been exhibited on a common floor by the ablest professional dancer. Though he felt not for himself, his hair actually stood on end as he looked with trembling upon her, whom he expected every moment to see disappear from his eyes into that abyss of darkness that lay below; and great was his relief from anxiety, when the dance was at last terminated on the hearth-stone where it began.

"And now, gentle sir," said the maniac, "you are doubtless well prepared for your night's repose

after this healthful exercise. Let me see that your sleeping apartment is ready."

Had the roaring elements without permitted the stranger to have again ventured abroad, he saw that he could not have possessed himself of the keys of the outer door, without the employment of force, which his feeling heart never could have allowed him to have attempted. He therefore sat patiently waiting until his hostess crossed the beams, and went into a small stone closet opening in the wall, whence she speedily returned, and lifting a lighted brand of bog-fir from the fire, she presented it to him with the same air as if she had been putting a silver candlestick, with a wax-candle in it, into his hand; and taking up another for herself, she, with all the delicacy of the most refined lady, wished him a good night, and retired into a room on the other side of the hall similar to that which she had indicated to him. Before retreating to his dormitory, the gentleman took the precaution to rake the fire together, and to add to it one or two pieces of wood, which were piled up in the chimney near it, so as to keep up a certain degree of light in the place. He then moved

across the beams to the stone closet, where he found a heap of ferns nicely spread over heather; and putting his cloak on, which had by this time become tolerably dry, he lay quietly down to try to procure a little repose.

He had not lain long until he was awakened by several rats running over him, and on looking out at the open door which gave him a view into the large apartment, he beheld swarms of these creatures gamboling about on the beams. Whilst he was lying watching their motions, he was surprised to perceive his hostess crawling silently forth on hands and knees from the small place she had occupied. Suddenly she sprang upon the rats with all the agility of a cat,—flew after them hither and thither, with wild and frantic yells, leaping at the walls in such a manner that she absolutely seemed to scramble up a portion of their height in the eagerness of her pursuit. The chase lasted until all the rats had disappeared, but ere it terminated, several of them had fallen victims to her wonderful expertness in capturing them. Proceeding then to the hearth, she seated herself on the stool by the fire, in a state of great excitement, and, inserting her long nails into them, she

stripped off their skins one after the other with inconceivable expedition, and as she did so, she rose up from time to time and suspended the bleeding reptiles on tenter-hooks on one side of the chimney among many others which the stranger had not till then observed, whilst she attached their skins to a similar set of hooks on the other side of the fire, amongst a corresponding number of trophies of the same kind.

"This is for my winter beef," said she in a wild soliloquy, "and this is for my winter cloak!" This she repeated as every new occasion required, till all were stowed away. After which the furious fit seemed to subside; and soon afterwards she retired to her bed, where she lay so quiet as to give no more disturbance to her stranger guest, till both were roused by the early dawn.

The morning was a smiling one, and as if she had partaken of its peaceful nature, she was again in one of her gentle lady-like humours.

"Will you walk, sweet sir?" said she to her guest, with a profound courtesy. "Will you walk forth to see the morning sun kissing the opening flowers and drinking up the dew-drops from their lips?—This way," continued she, as she ushered him

down the broken stair, and silently opened the locks and bolts of the outer door.

"I thank you most sincerely for your hospitality, Madam," said the traveller to her whilst she was carefully locking the door behind her. "I must now bid you farewell. I see my horse has had the good sense to break out from his stable during the night to feed on yonder rich bank of grass, so that he must be well enough refreshed by this time to be able to finish my journey."

"What," exclaimed the maniac with a sudden transition to her highest pitch of excitement, and with great rapidity of utterance, "are *you* going to leave me too? Did you not come to this my castle to woo me for your bride? And are you going to leave me too? But I forget,—I forget," continued she, sinking into a low thoughtful tone of feeling, whilst tears came rushing to her eyes and rolled down her cheeks. "I must not forget that I am pledged in my own mind. There was but one that ever truly loved me, and him I lost by being true to a base deceiver."

"What said you?" exclaimed the stranger with intense interest.

"I say that men are deceivers!" cried she with

her wildest tone and gesture; and then becoming gradually calm, she went on singing with great pathos,—

"Sigh no more ladies,
Ladies sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever,
Men were deceivers ever,
One foot on sea and one on shore.——

Yes! yes! on sea!—how many vows did that false man of the sea utter! and how cruelly did he break them on shore!"

"What do I hear!" exclaimed the gentleman. "The very song!—the very song we so often sang in duet together at Calcutta!"

"Calcutta!" cried the maniac, earnestly seizing his wrist, and in a tone of deep feeling; "yes, I sang that song often at Calcutta, with one who tenderly loved me. How often do I think on that!"

"Merciful powers!" cried the stranger, as he suddenly observed a small Indian wrought ring on the little finger of that hand by which she had for a moment held his; "by all that is wonderful, it is the ring! the very ring! Let me see that ring!"

"No!" said the maniac, in a high, haughty,

and determined manner; it shall never be touched by you nor any one else. *He* gave it to me—I have worn it—I have preserved it through all my miserable sufferings, and it shall go with me," added she, fervently kissing it; "it shall go with me to my cold cold grave."

"Stop, stop!" cried the gentleman, as she was turning away from him; "avoid me not! I am he who gave it you!"

"You!" cried she, stopping suddenly in her retreat, drawing herself up to her full height, and looking back upon him with an air of the most sovereign contempt; "you Charles Græme!—Ha! ha! ha! ha!—you Charles Græme!—His face was fair, and with the expression of an angel—your's is sallow, withered, and wrinkled, like that of a baboon,—his hair was lovely as the beams of the morning sun,—your's is white, as the eternal snow of the Himala;—his form was like that of the Grecian Apollo,—your's is like that of winter. Go, traitorous man! I have had enough of falsehood! Come not near me! Chirsty Ross will wed no one now but Charles Græme or the grave!"

In an instant she darted from his sight, before he was aware of her intention, and she disappeared

among the ruins. In the wildest state of agitation he rushed after her. He thought he heard a faint shriek, but he vainly sought her with unremitting solicitude for some hours. Believing at length that she must have got into the interior of the building, by some secret passage known only to herself, he unwillingly gave up his search, and the sea having now ebbed, and the flood in the river having somewhat subsided, he mounted his horse—with some difficulty crossed the ford—and, oppressed with sorrowful thoughts, he slowly made his way to the castle of his noble friend, to whom he confided his sad tale. From him he learned much that was new to him. A cambric handkerchief, embroidered with Chirsty's story, had found its way to her friends, who, after many difficulties, succeeded in rescuing her from her confinement. But alas! they found her not till her sufferings had rendered her a confirmed maniac. For a time she felt soothed by the kindness shewn her by her afflicted parents; and during the short time they lived, she amused herself, by wandering harmlessly about the scenes of her childhood. But, when her father and mother were both dead, and all her other relatives being like-

wise gone, or removed, she abandoned her home, and took up her abode in the ruinous building, of which she was for the most part left in undisturbed possession. Such was the melancholy outline of her history.

But Charles Græme was too feelingly alive to her unhappy situation to delay one moment in attempting to find her, that he might spend the remainder of his life in watching over and protecting her. Next day, therefore, assisted by his friends' people, he made his way into the ruins, and sought every part of them. But he sought in vain. Every thing remained as when he had left them on the previous morning, and although the door was locked, the bolts in the inside were not fastened, showing that the wretched inhabitant had not returned.

But the mystery was cleared up towards midday by a fisherman, who, as he was landing from his boat, found her lifeless body on the sands, where it had been left by the receding tide. The supposition was that she had been drowned in attempting to ford the swollen river, immediately after the scene of her parting with Charles Græme.

COMPLIMENTARY CRITICISM.

DOMINIE.—'Pon my word, Mr. Clifford, you have given us good measure indeed; and of ane excellent *faybric*, too. As I shall answer, we are well on with the small hours.

GRANT, (pulling out his watch.)—Is it possible? I declare I thought that it had been only about ten o'clock. Why, it is a good hour and a half after midnight.

CLIFFORD.—I was resolved to reel you out a a good long line, while I was about it. I thought that it was but fair to give Mr. Macpherson an opportunity of being even with me, by enjoying as good a slumber as I had last night, but his politeness was proof against the soporific influence of my tale.

DOMINIE.—Your tale would have been as good as an *umberella* against all the drowsy drops that ever were shaken from the bough of Morpheus himself.

AUTHOR.—Perhaps it might; but now that the umbrella is taken down, the dewy balm of the god begins to descend very heavily upon my eyelids.

GRANT.—Come, then, let us to bed.

The next morning's sun found us all later in bed than usual. After breakfast we left the village, and winding down through the forest of tall pines that lies between it and the river, and crossing the ancient bridge, we left the Spey behind us, and climbed the old military mountain road that leads towards Tomantoul.

CLIFFORD, (stopping and looking back over the valley.)—What a grand Highland prospect!

GRANT.—How proudly the grim old castle domineers over the extended forests, and the country of which it is the lord paramount! Let us sit down on this green bank of velvet grass, and enjoy the view. See how happily that single touch of bright light falls on the Cumins' tower.

CLIFFORD.—Well thought of. Talking of the Cumins, we must not allow you to leave us, Mr.

Macpherson, without telling us the story of Gibbon More, to which you alluded at Castle Grant.

DOMINIE.—I must tell it to you now then, gentlemen; for I grieve to say that I must part from you at the top of the hill a little way farther on. So, if you have a mind to sit down and enjoy this refreshing breeze for a little time, I shall give you the legend in as few words as I can.

LEGEND OF GIBBON MORE CUMIN AND HIS DAUGHTER BIGLA.

If you will be pleased to remember, gentlemen, I already told you, that previous to the fourteenth century the whole of Strathspey was subject to that great clan or nation the Cumins. It was about that period, as I informed you, that the Grants, from Glen Urquhart, were, by royal favour, enabled to possess themselves of Freuchie,—a place of strength, so called from a certain heathery hillock near to which it stood. The Cumins' tower was probably part of that original building which, in the course of generations, has grown up into that great baronial pile which we now behold yonder. It is natural to imagine that the Cumins could not possibly regard this alienation of the property of their clan without its begetting their hatred against

those who benefited by it, though they dared not always to show it by open deeds of violence. Their submission, however, was by no means owing to their weakness, for, notwithstanding that the Grants thus got a footing in this country, so powerful did the Cumins continue for a while, that many were the strangers that came from other clans to reside among them for protection, as was not uncommon in that olden time of trouble; these fugitives changed their own names for that of the people among whom they had thus found a safe retreat. But they were never admitted to a full participation in all the rights of the clan Cuminich, without submitting to undergo a very odd sort of an irreverential baptism, altogether worthy of the iron age in which it was practeesed.

Gilbert Cumin, Lord of Glenchearnich, as that country, watered by the river Dulnan, was denominated, was usually called Gibbon More, from his enormous size and strength. His chief residence was at Kincherdie, on the north western bank of the Spey, on the brink of the river, just where there is now a ferry across to Gartenmore, the vurra place, sir, where, as you have recorded in your book of "The Floods," the worthy Mrs. Came-

ron made her miraculous voyage upon a brander. The old chronicler tells us, that the house stood on a green moat, fenced by a ditch, the vestiges of which are yet to be seen. A current tradition beareth, that at night a salmon net was cast into the pool below the wall of the house, and a small rope, tied to the net, and brought in at the window, had a bell hung at it, which rung when a salmon came in and shook the net, so that the beast was quickly transferred from the river to the pot. What think ye of that, Mr. Clifford?

CLIFFORD.—Very Ingenious!—but foul poaching.

Well, whilst Gibbon More Cumin flourished, the ceremony of Cumin-making was always performed by his own hands. At the door of his castle there stood a huge stone, which I have often myself seen when I was a boy, and which, for ought I know, may be still in existence. It was hollowed out in the middle like an ancient baptismal font, and, indeed, it is by no means unlikely that it had been originally formed as such. Be this as it may, however, Gibbon More had it always filled with water for the refreshment of his fowls. But, besides its uniform devotion to the

truly ignoble purposes of his poutry, it was also employed by him in the unseemly rites to which I have referred. When any of the strangers of whom I have spoken had a desire to be metamorphosed into a Cumin, he was brought incontinently to Kincherdie. There the gigantic Lord of Glenchearnich, with the observance of very great and decorous form, lifted him up, and having slowly and solemnly reversed the natural perpendicular position of the poor sinner, he held him up by the heels, as Thetis did her infant boy Achilles, and having dipped his head three times amid the pullutory potation, as I may call the hen's water that filled the hollow stone, he set him, gasping and gaunting, upright on his legs again, telling him, in a stately tone, henceforward *to live and do like a Cumin as he now was.* But, notwithstanding this cantrip of Gibbon More's, there was a marked distinction still preserved between those who were Cumins by blood and those who were thus manufactured by him by virtue of the chuckies' water, for these children of adoption and their descendants had always the degrading addition given to them of *Cuminich clach-nan-cearc*, or *Cumins of the hen-trough.*

It happened, about the time I am speaking of, that young Sir John Grant, son and heir of Sir Patrick Grant of Stratherrock, now the laird of Freuchie, did one evening thus hold converse with a curious misformed waggish boy, who had no father, and who went by the familiar name of Archy *Abhach*, or Archy the Dwarf. Kicked and cuffed as the youth had been about the castle, Sir John had taken compassion on him, and had made him his page; and the boy's gratitude and attachment were consequently great.

"Why look ye so sad, sir?" demanded the boy, gently approaching his master, as he sat one evening on the battlement of the bartizan, looking towards the setting sun, with his head resting on the basket-hilt of his claymore, and his legs swinging about, as if he cared not whether he should swing himself over the wall or not. "Can poor Archy do nothing to rid thee of thy melancholy mood?"

"Nay, boy," said the knight, kindly taking his hand, "I doubt thy powers can scarcely reach my malady."

"As yet thou knowest not the extent of my powers," said the boy gravely, "nor can I show thee my remedy till thou makest me to know thy

disease. Yet, methinks, my skill is such that I might dare shrewdly to guess at it. Hast thou not ta'en a heart-wound from a pair of bright eyes?"

"So far I must needs say, that, judging from this first effort of thine, thy skill in divining is not to be questioned," said the knight.

"I will adventure farther then, and say, that the slanting beams of yonder declining sun are now gilding the casement of thy lady-love," said the boy Archy.

"Oh, Archy, Archy!" cried the knight, giving full way to his feelings, "I have never enjoyed a moment's peace since I beheld her at Whitsuntide at the church of Inverallan. She is an angel."

"Granting that she be so," said the boy, "for such they tell me must, reason or none, be yielded to all lovers—yea though the fair cause of their madness should be little less than a devil—granting, I say, that she be an angel, surely that should be no reason why thou should'st thus mope and pine, Sir Knight."

"Thou forgettest, boy, that the hatred naturally born between a Cumin and a Grant forbids all hope on my part," said Sir John despondingly.

"Methinks I could bring thee an instance where this hatred hath been exchanged for love," said the boy.

"Where? when? with whom?" cried the knight eagerly.

"Here—now—and with Sir John Grant towards Matilda, or Bigla Cumin, as she is called in the country here, daughter and heiress of the big Lord of Glenchearnich," replied the boy laughing.

"Pshaw!" cried the knight, with a disappointed air.

"Nay, dear master," said the boy; "and if thou hast been able to get over this natural-born antipathy, why may not Bigla Cumin have been equally blessed by heaven?"

"Ah!" cried the knight again, "would it might be so."

"Wilt thou but give me leave to go to try what may be done?" demanded the boy. "Be assured I shall be better than most mediciners, for if I do no good, I shall take especial care to do no harm."

"Kind boy, thou mayest e'en do thy best," said the knight. "I well know thy zeal for thy master's good; but were thy powers somewhat

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more equal to thy zeal, I should count more on the success of thine efforts."

"Such as my poor powers may be, they shall be used to the utmost in thy service, Sir Knight," said the boy. "Good night, then, so please thee; and farewell, it may be for some time, for I go on mine errand by to-morrow's dawn, and the better I prosper, the longer, perchance, may be mine absence."

"Go, and may the Blessed Virgin guide thee, and give thee luck," said the knight. "But see, boy, that thou bringest thine own person into no peril."

"Trust me for that," said Archy, as he disappeared from the bartizan.

The sun of next morning had scarcely well risen, and Gibbon More had just issued from his door to take a look at its face, that he might judge of the coming weather, when he descried an ill-formed dwarfish youth approaching, whose countenance, though ill-favoured, had a certain prepossessing expression in it.

"Whence comest thou, little man?" demanded the Lord of Glenchearnich.

"I come from the east," said the boy readily—

" my name is Archy—other name have I none—and I would fain be a Cumin."

" Ha! ha! ha!—a Cumin, wouldst thou?" said Gibbon, laughing, " By St. Mary, but our clan will be invincible when it shall be strengthened by such a powerful graff as thou!—Tell me what wouldst thou be good for, boy?"

" I could draw a bow at a pinch," said the boy. " But I must needs confess that I were better for the service of some gentle lady's bower. I'd willingly be thy fair daughter the Lady Matilda's page—and I'd serve her right faithfully."

" If Bigla should fancy thy ugly face, I care not if she should have thee," said Gibbon More, " for though thy countenance be homely, it would seem to be honest."

" Make me a Cumin and the lady shall have no cause to complain of me," replied the boy.

" Thou shalt have thy wish then, boy, without farther delay," said Gibbon More—and he straightway lifted up the youth—and, with more than ordinary gentleness, he performed the ceremony of the threefold ablution on him.

Archy Abhach, now converted into Archy Cumin, was speedily installed in his new office as

page to the Lady Bigla, and, in his very first interview, he contrived to establish himself very firmly in the good graces of his fair mistress. But what might have been considered more wonderful, he made a no less favourable impression upon her handmaiden, a matter which jealousy might have rendered more difficult with any attendant of a less amiable disposition than the attached Agnes possessed.

"There is something more than usually interesting about that poor friendless boy," said the lady to Agnes, after her new page had been dismissed from her presence for a short time.

"A most interesting youth, notwithstanding the niggardly way in which dame Nature seems to have treated him," said Agnes archly; "but as to his being friendless, I shrewdly suspect that he is a rogue for making that pretence."

"What mean you, Agnes?" demanded Bigla.

"I mean that the varlet had no need to have come to Kincherdie to look for protection, seeing that he hath long been the favourite of one of the bravest young knights in all the country round," said Agnes.

"Of whom do you speak?" demanded Bigla.

"Of a certain Sir John Grant, son and heir of old Sir Patrick Grant of Freuchie," replied Agnes, with an air of mock gravity; "but, perhaps, you have never heard or seen the man."

"Oh Agnes!" cried Bigla, energetically clasping her hands, and throwing down her eyes and blushing deeply.

"You have heard of him then, lady?" said Agnes.

"A truce to your raillery," said Bigla seriously, "and tell me quickly all you know or guess of this matter."

"Why, all I know of the matter is simply this," said Agnes, in the same tone, "last Whitsuntide, the Lady Bigla Cumin saw, for the first time, the handsome young knight, Sir John Grant of Freuchie at the church of Inverallan. The knight, with becoming gallantry, stepped gracefully forward and lifted the lady to her saddle, sighing deeply as he resigned the precious load to her prancing palfrey. The lady's bower damsel, the quick-sighted Agnes Cumin, soon perceived that the said knight and lady had made a mutual impression on each other—with her wonted acuteness and ingenuity, the said damsel soon extracted

the truth from the said lady—and seeing that a misformed imp of a page, then in attendance on the said knight, hath now, without any apparent cause, left so good a master in order to undergo the ceremony of being baptised as a Cumin in the nauseous hentrough, the said acute damsel ventures readily to pronounce that the flame burns as brightly and warmly at Freuchie as it does in my lady's bower at Kincherdie—that is all."

"But what *can* Sir John Grant mean by all this?" demanded Bigla, blushing more deeply than ever.

"To seek and secure an interview to be sure," replied Agnes, "but I shall soon know what he would be at," continued she.—"I shall soon be at the bottom of it all."

Without giving the Lady Bigla time to reply, the prompt and decided Agnes hurried away to hold converse with the page. Meeting, as they did, like two sharp flints, they were not long in striking fire enough to throw light upon the matter. Having mutually made one another fully aware of the position of affairs on both sides, they, without farther hesitation, proceeded, like two able plenipotentiaries, to arrange plans for the

future; and it was finally agreed between them, without farther ceremony, that the high contracting parties should meet in person, on the ensuing evening, in the bourtree bower, at the lower end of the garden, beyond the rampart, and the page was forthwith dispatched on a secret mission to the knight to inform him immediately of this so happy an arrangement.

"Blessed Virgin, what hast thou done, Agnes!" cried Bigla Cumin, ere she had well heard her maid to an end; and hiding her crimsoned face with both her hands,—"What *will* Sir John Grant think of me?"

"He will call you an angel, as Archy tells me he has already done," said Agnes coolly.

"Nay, nay, but this must not be!" said Bigla, starting from her chair.—"Run, Agnes, and stop the boy from going on this most foolish and imprudent errand."

"Stop him," said Agnes. "You might as well ask me to stop Black Peter's arrow, after it has left his bow-string. The boy is half way to Freuchie by this time. He knows too well how warmly his news will be received to allow the grass to grow at his heels."

"What will my father say to this strange arrangement, if it should come to his knowledge?" cried Bigla, "to meet as a lover the son of the head of the very house with which we have ever held so great enmity."

"In the first place, your father, good man, must know nothing about this meeting," said Agnes. "It concerns him not; secondly, if there hath been ill blood for so long between the two clans, the sooner peace and friendship is re-established the better, especially after two of the principal persons have met together in a Christian church, as you and Sir John have done."

"Agnes, Agnes!" cried the lady, with emotions of vexation not altogether unmingled, it must be confessed, with certain tinglings of a more agreeable nature, "Agnes, Agnes!—thy precipitation in this matter hath brought me into a most distressing state of perplexity. I know not what to do."

But before the morning's sun had well risen, the page appeared in the lady's presence, with a perfumed billet, sealed with a flame-coloured silk ribbon, and filled with such professions of love on the part of Sir John Grant, as brought tenfold

blushes into the lovely face of Bigla; and so touched her young heart as to leave her without a chance of withstanding the powerful arguments of her handmaiden Agnes, backed up as they were by the warm descriptions of his master's sufferings, and the earnest solicitations for her compassion on him, which were so eloquently urged by the clever page. The result was, that, attended by Agnes, she did go tremblingly to the trysting place at the appointed hour—listened with a pleasure she had never felt before to all the knight's fervent vows—and both were made so happy by their mutual confessions, that the prudential suggestions of Agnes and Archy were repeatedly required, ere the tender separation could be effected. So well, however, was that and several other interviews of a similar nature planned and brought about by the two able auxiliaries, that for a long time the easy Gibbon More had no suspicion that anything of the sort was going on. But at length it did happen, that as Sir John Grant was returning from one of these meetings, he was rather unluckily encountered, not far from the house of Kincherdie, by Hector, the confidential servant of Gibbon More. The man's suspicions were so awakened by the cir-

cumstance of the knight being on foot, that he scrupled not to follow him at a distance, until he saw him join an attendant who held a couple of horses in a grove about a mile off. Full of his discovery, Hector went directly to Gibbon More; and there is no saying what the consequences might have been had not the Lord of Glenchearnich been a person of a temperament almost miraculously apathetical. So wonderful was his disposition in this respect, indeed, that it was only after his patience had been assailed and battered, as it were, by repeated and most provoking attacks, that he ever could be excited at all. But then, indeed, when he was once roused, he became on the sudden like a raging lion, and his enormous strength and fearless courage being brought tremendously into action by his fury, the effects were quite terrific.

"So you think, Hector, that the young Strathcrrock stripling has been here to look after Bigla," said Gibbon, after hearing his man's story to an end. "Hum,—ha! I did perceive that the maiden caught his eye at the church of Inverallan on Whitsuntide.—Ha, ha, ha!—to think of a Grant being mated with her, is too ridiculous. But, for all

that, I cannot blame the boy for bowing before the shrine of my daughter's beauty. I'll warrant the young goose came over here to try to get another peep, were it only of her robe, as it might chance to sweep by her casement. Wiser folks than he have done as foolish things—I've done as much myself in my youth. But Bigla can know nought of this, so there is no harm done."

Whether Hector's renewed cautions did or did not succeed in making his master think something more of this matter than he was thus at first disposed to do, I cannot say; but certain it is, that the Lord of Glenchearnich was somewhat suddenly seized with the resolution of going some weeks earlier than he was wont, to spend the summer months on his hill-grazing property of Delnahaitnich, near the source of the river Dulnan. This was a most untoward event for the lovers, not only because the distance between them was thus immensely encreased, but because Gibbon More's residence there was a small cottage, which might be called little better than a mere *shealing*,* in

* A dwelling only occupied in summer whilst feeding the cattle on the highest hill grazings. The same word as the Swiss *chalet*.

or about which it would be next to impossible for them to meet without observation. And accordingly, after this move was made, some weeks were vainly expended in fruitless attempts on the part of Archy Abhach to procure for his master, Sir John, even the gratification of such a distant view of the Lady Bigla's robe, as her father described in his conversation with Hector. Yet Sir John often hovered about the place, and lay for many a night wrapped up in his plaid among the heather of the neighbouring forest, with no other shelter but a projecting rock, and the thick foliage of the firs that grew over it. Archy Abhach was almost as much disappointed as Sir John himself at being so baulked. His ingenuity was put to the very rack, but all without effect; because it somehow or other happened that Gibbon More never went from home, and so his daughter was never left for one moment out of his sight. The knight had thus no comfort but in the frequent letters and messages which Archy contrived to carry between the lovers, and which they were fain to employ for want of those more interesting interviews, of which they were now altogether deprived.

It happened that Archy Abhach was one night

sent with one of those letters towards the place where his master Sir John Grant was lying hid in the upper part of the forest of Dulnan, which then spread much higher over the hills than it now does. The moon was not yet risen, and the dense foliage overhead very much increased the darkness and the difficulty of his way. As he was scrambling along past the narrow mouth of a small ravine that opened on the course of the stream he was following, he came suddenly upon two men who were seated beside the dying embers of a fire which they seemed to have used for some purpose of rude and hasty cookery. Curiosity led him involuntarily to stop for a moment to observe them ; but becoming instantly aware of his imprudence in doing so, he moved quickly away, and began to run as hard as he could. But the consequences which he dreaded were already incurred, and he had not gone many paces when he heard footsteps hurrying after him. He fled as fast as his legs could carry him, but the darkness was such that he tripped and fell, and his neck was instantly in the grasp of a powerful hand.

" I have him fast," said a rough voice, in Gaelic ;

"it is but a very small boy, after all—Shall I whittle his craig with my skian-dhu?"

"Not for thy life," replied another voice, in the same language.—"Bring him along with thee, that we may see what he is. Why would'st thou hurt the creature till we know something more about him?"

The man who had seized Archy now threw him over his shoulder as he would have done a dead hare, and groped his way back with him to the ravine, where, a blaze being produced by a dry bush of heather, the boy was set down between them for examination. Archy, on his part, was not slow in using his eyes also, and in a much less time than I can tell it to you, he ran them over the bulky rough figure of the individual who had seized him, and then as hastily surveyed the compact well put-together active-looking person, and intelligent countenance of the other, who seemed in every respect to be the superior. This last was by no means strange to him, and, to the surprise of the man himself, he immediately addressed him by his name.

"Corrie MacDonald!" said he, "sure I am

that thou wilt never hurt any man belonging to Sir Patrick Grant of Stratherrock?"

But I must now tell you that this same Corrie MacDonald was a certain hero who flourished in those days in Lochaber, and who made himself dreaded all through Moray-land and its neighbouring districts by the periodical visits of plunder which he paid to them. Amongst other tracts of country, Strathspey and its tributary vallies were wont to be a prominent object of his attention. He had always a large band of followers at his command, who were equally expert in driving away herds of cattle, and brave in beating off the owners when they pursued with the hope of recovering them. Corrie was a reaver of no ordinary character; for, robber though he was, he had a natural fund of liberality and generosity about him; and he had so great a stock of native humour in him, that he was ever ready to indulge his waggish disposition at any expense; and no predatory expedition had ever half so great a relish for him, as that in which he could contrive to mix up a bit of a frolic. Many a cow and ox had Corrie MacDonald carried away from the extensive possessions of the Lord of Glenchearnich. But

these trifling depredations never disturbed the good temper or overcame the patience of that most extraordinary man, the effect of whose unparalleled forbearance was to awaken in the inquiring mind of Corrie MacDonald a certain philosophic curiosity to ascertain by experiment to what extent it was capable of being stretched; and he had long panted for a favourable opportunity of bringing this investigation to a fair trial.

"Corrie MacDonald," cried Archy Abhach, in a whining tone, "sure I am that thou who hast never had quarrel with Sir Patrick Grant of Strath-errock wilt never hurt any man belonging to him."

"Thou art right," replied Corrie. "Not only shall I respect the safety of every man belonging to Sir Patrick Grant, but I will even respect thee, who art but a mannikin, if thou canst prove thyself to be his. I have had peaceable passage to and fro through his grounds on Loch Ness Side for too many years to do otherwise."

"Then look ye here," said Archy, plucking from his bosom the letter of which he was the bearer, and straightway showing the address, which was,—*To the honourable and gallant*

knight, Sir John Grant of Freuchie; these, with speed.

"That is all well," said Corrie. "But methinks, mannikin, that this is anything but the road to Freuchie, if I know aught of this country side."

"My master is up in the forest, a little bit above this, waiting for my tidings," said Archy.

"Aha!" cried Corrie, relaxing his features into a smile, "some love adventure, I warrant me. Awell! I am the last man to put hindrance in the way of any such matter, especially where Sir John Grant is concerned. Nay, I would willingly go a good way out of my road to help him on."

"Sayest thou so, Corrie MacDonald!" cried the urchin. "Then could I tell thee how thou mightest lend my master thy most effectual aid, and yet keep thine own road still, and that to thine own most abundant profit."

"How may that be, my small man?" demanded Corrie. "If thou canst make thy plans clear to my conviction, thou shalt find me ready, zealous, prompt, and decisive."

"Thou knowest Gibbon More Cumin, lord

of these broad lands of Glenchearnich," said Archy.

"Know him?" said Corrie with a grin. "Well do I that."

"He is living here hard by at Delnahaitnich," continued the page. "He keeps home so close, that no one can even have a sight of his daughter, far less have speech of her. Couldst thou not carry away his cattle from the forest here, so as to furnish him with a reasonably rational object for travelling for a season?"

"By Saint Comb, but thou hast a wit larger than the tiny proportions of thy body might teach one to look for!" said Corrie. "The notion is excellent. I have long wished to work that lump of dough into a ferment. And, by Saint Mary, as the *creach* will be carried off from under his very nose, I shall stir up his temper now, if it is to be stirred up at all by mortal man. So speed to thy master, and keep him advised to watch his time; and if I don't by and bye clear the way for him, by giving Gibbon More and his people a chase of a day or two through the hills after me and my men, I shall wonder of it."

"Master, master," cried Gibbon More's man, Hector, as he came running in to him next morning quite out of breath, "Corrie MacDonald has been in the forest last night, and he has carried away every stot he could find on this part of your lands."

"Has the rascal taken the cows too?" demanded Gibbon, coolly.

"No—sure enough—he has not taken a single cow," replied Hector, "I counted the cow-beasts myself and they are all safe."

"There was some civility in that, however," said Gibbon laughing. "The fellow is a thief of some consideration; for if he hath left us the cows, thou knowest, Hector, that we shall have plenty of stot-beasts by and bye."

"Ou aye, surely, sir," said Hector, as he retired, very much disappointed by the manner in which his intelligence had been received.

Corrie was not without his spies; and the oxen were hardly well so far over the hill, on their way to Lochaber, as to be fairly considered beyond all reach of recovery, when he returned with some of his people to prowl about Delnahaitnich. There

he soon learned from Archy Abhach the manner and speech with which Gibbon More had received the news of his loss.

"I'll try him again," said Corrie. "The fellow must be the dullest stirk that ever was calved."

"The cows are all gone now, master!" cried the same ill-omened messenger, as he entered Gibbon More's apartment next morning before he was out of bed.

"A plague upon the plundering thief," cried Gibbon More, "has he taken the young beasts too?"

"No!" said the man, who was much disappointed to find that this, his second piece of bad news, was just as unsuccessful in rousing his master's ire as his first had been. "He has not ta'en a single young beast, but, on my conscience, I'm thinking he has ta'en enough."

"The villain robs by rule, I see," said Gibbon; "but since the young beasts are safe, Hector, we shall have plenty of both cows and stots again, anon, you know."

Corrie MacDonald, who was curious to find out how this second loss was to affect Gibbon, was absolutely piqued beyond endurance when he heard

of the quiet manner in which he had taken it. Withdrawing a handful of his people from the large body of them who were then in charge of the second prey he had taken, he lay in ambush for a third night.

"We're altogether harried now then!" cried Hector, as he appeared the third morning with a face like a ghost. "Every young beast upon the place is gone."

"What!" cried Gibbon More, starting up to hurry on his clothes in a state of the fiercest excitement, "does the caitiff make a butt of me?—I can bear to lose my bestial, but to be played on thus by a thieving scoundrel is more than man's patience can suffer. I'll teach these ruffians to crack their jokes upon me! Where is my two-handed sword?"

"Father, father! dear father, where are ye running to?" cried his daughter Bigla, as she met him raging out at the door like a roaring lion. "Where are you running without your bonnet!"

"I have no time to speak now," replied the infuriated Gibbon. "I'll tell you all about it when I come back."

"I fear he has gone on some rash and danger-

ous enterprise," said Bigla, "run, run Hector and gather the people, and be after him with help as fast as you may."

Hector was not slow; but he must have been active indeed, if he could have caught Gibbon More at the pace he was going. He rushed up the steep hill in front of his dwelling, and was soon out of sight.

Gibbon had no sooner reached the summit, than, throwing his eyes abroad, he espied his young cattle feeding on the south side of the hill called the *Geal-charn*, or the Hoary Hill; and from the smoke which he observed curling up from a ravine at a short distance from the spot where the animals were scattered about, he at once conjectured that the robbers had chosen that concealment as a fit place for cooking their morning meal. He was right in this supposition; for, judging from his former apathy, Corrie MacDonald had not quite calculated that this third act of depredation would lead to so speedy a pursuit.

"What a pity it is that Gibbon More Cumin has no more beasts left in Delnahaitnich," said Corrie MacDonald to his people, with an ironical laugh, as they sat in a circle round the fire, de-

vouring one of the young beasts they had killed.

" We need not come back here for a while, till he sends up some more stock from Kincherdie," said one of his men.

" We have done not that much amiss in these three turns," said another. " I'm thinking we may be content to free him of *black mail* for a season."

" By the beard of St. Barnabas, but we'll come back again and again, until we drive away every beast the cowardly loon has between this and Spey," said Corrie. " What should we do with such a lump of butter, but keep melting at it as long as it will run."

" Surely, surely," replied several of them.

" It will make our broth all the fatter," said Corrie, laughing again.

" Villains, do ye dare to laugh at me, at the very moment when you are feeding at my cost?" cried Gibbon More, rushing suddenly and unexpectedly among them, like a raging wolf into a flock of penned sheep. " I'll teach you to make a fool of me."

The immense blade of his two-handed sword gleamed like a meteor in the air, flashed in the

sun, and shed lightnings into their terrified eyes. Each of them tried to scramble to his feet as he best could; and one or two were shorn of their heads, ere they could rise from the ground. Bonnets with heads in them fell to right and left, as I have seen ripe apples scattered from their parent bough by a violent gust of wind, or by the inroad of some thieving schoolboy. No one thought of any thing else but flight; and the actions of all were as quick as their thoughts. But Gibbon More's enormous double-edged weapon was quicker in the repetition of its sweeping cuts than even thought itself. On he went, slashing right and left after them as they fled, till he had strewed the ravine and the hill-side with about a dozen of their carcasses, and then, breathless and overcome with rage, haste, and toil, he sat himself down to rest on the heather. The remainder of the robbers were thus allowed to escape; and as he did not know the boasting Corrie MacDonald personally, that hero contrived to get safe away among the rest, and went home to Lochaber, somewhat less disposed to try experiments on the temper of Gibbon More Cumin, than he had declared himself to be before this his terrible and unlooked for onslaught.

Gibbon More's people, with Hector at their head, arrived too late to share with him in the glory of his victory. But they were useful in burying the slain. A few tumuli, which are still to be seen raising their green heads among the heather, on the southern declivity of the *Geal-charn*, were thrown up by them over the dead bodies; and they then had the satisfaction of driving home their master's young cattle in safety to their native pasture, where the animals afterwards grew to be cows and oxen, entirely free from any farther alarm from Corrie MacDonald.

I need not say that the sharp-witted page took good care that his master should profit by the temporary absence of Gibbon More. Sir John Grant was at the cottage immediately after the Lord of Glenchearnich had left it. But the knight had little advantage after all from an adventure which had cost Corrie MacDonald so dear. He had indeed, the satisfaction of again beholding and conversing with Bigla; but, filled as she was at the time with alarm and anxiety about her father's safety, she could talk about or listen to no other subject. The time of the Lord of Glenchearnich's absence fled like a short dream. His anticipated

travel of a few days had, by his own extraordinary activity and courage, been reduced to a few short hours, and the wary and watchful page had barely time to warn his master away, ere Gibbon More's voice was heard calling to his people, as he returned to the house begrimed with the blood and soil of his recent conflict.

But Sir John's more frequent opportunities of meeting with Bigla were soon afterwards again happily renewed by the return of Gibbon More to Kincherdie; and, by the ingenuity of the page, these stolen interviews passed over undiscovered even by the lynx-eyed Hector, whose energies were by this time somewhat diverted from their wonted watchfulness, by a certain newborn affection which had recently possessed his bosom for the fair maid Agnes.

It happened on one occasion that Gibbon More chanced to go to a fair or market at Inverness. The streets were crowded with people, as well as with horses, cows, and oxen of all sorts. There might have been observed the eagle-winged bonnet of the chief, followed by his tail of clansmen and dependants,—and chieftains were seen promiscuously mingled with cattle-boys, gillies, and

serfs of every degree and denomination, thronging the public way. Many were the friendly salutations, and many the flashes of hostile defiance that passed among the various personages, who, coming from distant parts of the country, chanced on that day to meet each other. Often was the authority of the provost, the bailies, the sheriff, and other officials called into operation to quell embryo quarrels, and sometimes it was all that the united forces of these public functionaries could do to keep the restless and blood-thirsty dirks and claymores in their sheaths. Rarely did the mantled and well wimpled damsels venture forth amidst the complication of dangers that were to be encountered at every step from the prevalence of those quarrels, as well as from the horns of the cattle and the heels of the horses. They contented themselves with saluting their friends from their open lattices,—and many were the warm though distant acknowledgments that took place between the young and the fair ladies, who, whilst they were ostensibly occupied in gazing at the marvels in the street,—at the jesters and mummers who jingled their bells, or grinned with their painted faces, and trolled their rude and threadbare rhymes

to ditties as unpolished, the pretty creatures were in reality altogether overlooking these vulgar absurdities, and were holding interesting conversations by signals, only known to themselves, with their handsome Highland lovers in the street.

Bigla Cumin was an heiress of consequence, but she was moreover very beautiful, so that many were the eyes that sought her as she sat at a lofty balcony in the house of a burgher friend of her father's, and not a few were those who endeavoured, and endeavoured in vain, to obtain one glance of recognition from her. I do not mean to say, however, that the lass was haughty, but she bore herself with the modesty befitting her years and her sex. There was but one on whom she did vouchsafe to look with an eye of yespecial favour, and that was Sir John Grant. Her heart beat in double time when he and his father Sir Patrick the Lord of Stratherrock passed by in their gay red and green tartan, which, except in its broad blue *lysts* and in its want of those pure white *sprainges* which enliven that of the Cumin, had so general a resemblance to it, that at a little distance they might have been easily mistaken for each other. When the rays from her bright eyes shot across

the street in a condescending smile in return for the more than merely courteous reverence which he made to her, their sunshine was concentrated, if I may so express myself, as if it had been met by the burning glasses of that most wonderful man Archimedes, and it was returned to her in one melting focus of adoration.

"Angel that she is!" said Sir John to his father.

"She is an angel, indeed, boy!" replied the elder knight; "and, moreover, there be angels enow in her father's coffers, not to mention those broad acres of his which would give to the Grants so pretty a little principality in Strathspey. Stick to her, boy! She is well worth the winning."

"Would I could but have an interview with her, freed from all chance of interruption from her old father!" said Sir John in a tone of vexation.

"Trust to me, dear master," said Archy Abhach, in a whisper, as at that moment he plucked the knight's sleeve. "Watch well thy time. I have seen some one in the town here to-day who will be right willing to lend thee a helping hand."

Gibbon More was not wont to go without the following of a chieftain on such occasions as this; and

he generally bore his portly person over the crown of the causeway with a dignity which, when at home, he laid aside with his best bonnet, doublet, and plaid. The recognition between him and his new neighbour, as he called him, was remarkably warm and friendly on the part of Sir Patrick Grant, and very stately and condescending on his own side. His eyes were offended at the sight of the two Grants and their followers, and he sought relief from them in looking at a beautiful black palfrey which a West Highland gilly was leading down the street. The prancing, the caracolling, and the menage of the animal shewed that it had been bred of the gentlest Arabian blood in some far away English pasture.

"Ho!" cried Gibbon, stopping the man. "Who is the owner of that beautiful creature?"

"I am the owner, sir," replied a sharp eyed little man, right well accoutred both as to his arms and garb, but having no remarkable signs of any great rank about him.

"Are you for parting with the pfetty creature?" enquired Gibbon More.

"I should not care much to part with him to a good customer," replied the other.

"Is he young, gentle, sound, and sure-footed?" demanded Gibbon.

"I'll answer all your questions by and bye," replied the West Highlander, "if you will only do me the favour to satisfy me as to one point."

"What is that?" asked Gibbon More.

"Will you tell me what part of the country you come from?"

"From Strathspey, to be sure," replied Gibbon.

"I guessed as much," said the other. "I see, moreover, from the set of your tartan that you are a Cumin, and by your attire, bearing, and following, I can guess that you are a gentleman of some note. Do you happen to know Gibbon More Cumin of your country?"

"Know Gibbon More Cumin!" cried he, laughing good humouredly; "if I know any one, I should know him, seeing that he always lives in the house with me, and that we never eat a meal asunder. I love him better than a brother. But not to keep you any longer in doubt—I am Gibbon More Cumin!"

"I am truly glad to see you," said the West Highlander, seizing his hand and shaking it heart-

ily. "You are the man, of all others alive, to whom I am most obliged."

"Ha, friend!" replied Gibbon, looking hard and seriously at him, "I cannot say that I recollect having ever seen you before; how then have I happened so to have obliged you?"

"Well!" said the other, "if you cannot remember that you ever saw me before, the greater was your kindness to me—unsight, unseen, as we say. It is not every man that keeps such an easy reckoning as you do of the benefits for which his friends are indebted to him."

"But what benefit have you had from me?" demanded Gibbon.

"I'll tell you that," said the West Highlander. "I'll tell you that in a moment. You see I have no less than three strapping lasses of daughters. I have married all the three, and to each one of them I gave a tocher which you provided."

"Tut!" cried Gibbon, laughing, "the man is demented. When did I ever give a tocher to daughter of yours? By St. Mungo, I have a strapping lass of a daughter of my own to portion. I have little ado therefore to portion those of other people."

"What I say is nevertheless true," replied the other. "And so sensible am I of the obligations I owe to you, that by way of a small return, and to shew my gratitude, I must ask of you, as a favour, to accept of this horse of mine as a present for your daughter; and if you will go to the inn with me, I shall be happy to give you a pint of French Claret, if such be to be had in the town, to drink good luck to the young lady and her new palfrey."

"As I am a Cumin you are an honest fellow!" cried Gibbon More, shaking him again heartily by the hand,—"But I prythee explain—I cannot accept either your present or your wine till you tell me who you are, and until you expound your riddle to me."

"I am not sure how far I am safe to do that," said the other archly, "especially here, on the High Street of Inverness; and you standing there with so many pretty men at your back."

"If I have done you kindnesses heretofore," said Gibbon, "what fear can you have of me now, stand where I will, or let me be backed as I may?"

"Why, then, you see," said the other with a certain degree of comical hesitation, "I must confess that I did, on one occasion, presume somewhat too

far on your liberality, and in your anger you gave me such a fright, that I am not sure that I have just altogether got the better of it yet."

"Ha! ha! ha! why you give me more riddles every time you open your mouth," replied Gibbon. "When did I ever give you a fright?"

"Ou! troth sudden and terrible was the fright you gave me!" said the man, "and surely after tochering off three daughters, each of them with twelve beautiful milch cows and a bull, all of which came from your pastures, I should have been contented. But I'm thinking that if I was a small thing over greedy, the fright I got from Gibbon More's two-handed sword, as it flashed behind me on the Geal Charn, was enough to put all greed out of my head, so far at least as he was concerned."

"Hoo!" exclaimed Gibbon with a long whistle, —"ha! ha! ha! Corrie MacDonald! as I am a Cumin, you are a most merry conditioned rogue as ever I met with! Your hand again! I accept your handsome present, and I will go drink your pot of wine with you, with all my heart, to my daughter's health, and to a better acquaintance between you and me. Ha! ha! ha! By St. Mary, but I am sorry now that I killed your men and so

grievously frightened yourself. But, though the poor fellows are past all hope of recovery now, I am resolved that your dread of me shall be drowned in your own flaggon. Lead on then, my brave fellow, to your hostel."

Gibbon More had too much enjoyment in this unexpected meeting and merry-making to allow it to terminate very soon, but Bigla Cumin was in some degree recompensed for the tedious time she had to tarry for her father, by the long interview which she enjoyed with Sir John Grant, as well as by the sight of the beautiful prancing palfrey, which was led out for her to ride home upon.

It was not very long after this occurrence, that poor Gibbon More Cumin was seized with a sudden malady, of which he died after a few days' illness, and he was carried by his friends and dependants to be laid to sleep in the tomb of his fathers. Jealous of the Grants, even in his dying moments, he left Bigla, his orphan daughter and heiress, under the guardianship of some of the chieftains of his own clan, with earnest injunctions above all things to "keep her out of the *fremyt** hands of Freuchie."

* Strange.

There was no one more anxious to fulfil this dying order of Gibbon's than one of the Cumin's, who at that time possessed Logie, which, in later times became the patrimonial property of that more recent branch whence proceeded the worthy family, which is now so designated. This gentleman had been for some time one of Bigla's suitors; and his pretensions had been always favourably looked upon by her father. The days of mourning for the old man were not yet expired, when Logie came to Kincherdie, gaily apparelled, and well appointed and attended, and urging the authority of a father's dying wish, he signified to Bigla his desire of taking her with him on the ensuing day to his residence on the banks of the river Findhorn, where, as his guest, and under the protection of his aged mother, she should find a safe and comfortable asylum. Though satisfied that there was more of the warmth of the lover in the language in which this invitation was conveyed, than altogether befitted the character of a guardian, yet the young maiden, in her present lonely state, could not well find any reasonable excuse for refusal, and accordingly she was compelled, however unwilling-

ly, to accept his offer, and she issued orders to her people to prepare for the journey.

The prospect of so soon leaving that home, where she had spent her whole life under the fostering care of her doting father, filled her heart with a double portion of sorrow; and after artlessly communicating her feelings to Logie and his friends, she craved their pardon—entreated them to entertain one another, and to make themselves at home—and then she sought the retirement of her chamber, where she spent the remainder of the day, and the greater part of the evening, in giving way to that affliction which had more than one exciting cause.

"My dear mistress," said her faithful maid Agnes Cumin, breaking in upon her as she sat in silent abstraction, with her moist cheek resting upon her hand, "Why should you cry your eyes out thus. The night is soft and balmy—a little fresh air would do you good. Do let me throw this plaid over you, and be persuaded to step out a little, were it only as far beyond the walls as the bourtree bower at the lower end of the garden."

"I cannot, my good Aggy," replied Bigla, with a fresh flood of tears; "in sooth I have no heart."

"Come! be persuaded to try the air," said Agnes, "Who knows what sighs and tears may be at this moment idly fanning the leaves and watering the rosebuds of your own bonny bower."

"What say you?" cried Bigla, starting up with a suddenly acquired energy; "What say you, Aggy? is *he* in the arbour?"

"Hush, my lady!" said the cautious girl, "he *is* there; and from his tears and sighs I should judge that his heart is well atuned to thine at this moment."

"Let me fly to him!" exclaimed Bigla, "the moments are most precious;" and throwing her plaid hastily around her, she stole out beyond the barbican; and, having reached the garden, she ran on tiptoe to the simple elder-bush bower at the farther end of it, leaving Archy Abhach to keep watch against intrusion.

The scene between Bigla and her lover was tender and melting. For a time they did little else than weep and sigh together.

"Aggy tells me that you go with Logie tomorrow," said Sir John at last. "How could you suffer yourself to be persuaded to agree to any such arrangement?"

"It was with no good will that I did so," replied Bigla; "but as Logie was armed with my dear departed father's delegated authority, and as his proposal was backed by a parent's dying wish, I could not withstand his request."

"Holy Mother, then art thou lost to me for ever!" cried Sir John passionately. "Canst thou thus coolly resolve, even for such a cause, to throw thyself into the very jaws of those from whom I can never hope to reclaim thee but by force of arms!"

"Force of arms!" said Bigla. "I question much whether any force of arms from the Grants could prevail against the men of my clan, who will have the keeping of me. But fear not, for the time is not far distant when the law will give me guidance of mine own affairs; then mayest thou reclaim me from myself with full assurance of a ready compliance on my part."

"But what if these clansmen of thine should basely coerce thee to a hated union with one of themselves?—with Logie, for instance, who is old enough to be thy father!"

"I have no such fears," replied Bigla.

"By the rood, but I have!" cried Sir John

hurriedly. "You forget the old saying,—*Whilst there are leaves in the forest there* a—a—a—."

"Nay," said Bigla, playfully, "do finish your proverb, Sir Knight,—*Whilst there are leaves in the forest there will be guile in a Cumin.* Did your worship mean that as a compliment to me, or do you forget that I, too, am a Cumin."

"Nay, nay, nay! my dearest Bigla, you are truth itself," replied Sir John, eagerly. "Pardon me, my love, for quoting this old saw; but, seriously, you are too valuable, too tempting a prize to be risked in any hands but—but—but—."

"But *yours*, as I presume thou wouldst say, good Sir Knight, "replied Bigla, interrupting him in the same playful tone.

"Thou hast said it, angel of my life!" exclaimed Sir John, rapturously kissing her hand. "I can and will resign thee to no one! Thou art my pledged, mine affianced bride!"

"I am, I am, indeed I am," said Bigla, tenderly.

"Then why shouldst thou put our mutual happiness to peril?" cried Sir John. "Why not secure it by flying with me this moment? My

horses and people are within a whistle of where we now are, and in half an hour's riding or so we shall be safe within the walls of Castle Grant."

"No, no, no!" replied she, "a stolen marriage would neither be for the credit of Sir John Grant nor for that of Bigla Cumin. Besides, I should be but a poor offering at Castle Grant were my broad lands not well buckled to my back."

"I care not for thy lands," said Sir John, "'tis thyself I would wed, and not thine estates. And if that be all, let us to horse forthwith. Better for me to secure thy precious self, though with the chance of losing thy lands, than lose thee in trying to save thy lands."

"'Tis gallantly resolved of thee, Sir John," said Bigla; "but I cannot allow thy chivalrous ardour to do us both so serious an injury. All I ask of thee, then, is to trust every thing to my discretion and resolution, and, depend upon it, thou hast nothing to fear."

The parting between the two lovers was tender and prolonged, and it was only at length finally effected by the interference of Agnes and the page, who came running to tell them that the revellers

in the hall were breaking up. And what he told them was true, for Bigla found that she required the exertion of some degree of ingenuity to effect her retreat to her chamber unnoticed.

An early hour of the next day beheld the cavalcade, formed by the united trains of Bigla Cumin and her kinsman the Laird of Logie, winding away from her paternal mansion, amidst the mingled lamentations and benedictions of her people. Bigla was mounted on her favourite palfrey, the beautiful and fleet courser of Arabian blood, which was presented to her by Corrie MacDonald. Her maid Agnes rode by her side on an animal of metal little short of that which carried her mistress. Logie and his friends, all well armed, surrounded both in a sort of irregular phalanx, which Bigla could not help thinking had more the appearance of a guard to prevent the escape of a prisoner, than that which might do her honour or give her protection. Her own followers were but few, and they were mixed up with those of the Laird of Logie. In the midst of them was the faithful page Archy, to whose care was committed the charge of a small iron-bound oaken chest, which contained her family charters, and other important documents.

This Logie had especially insisted that she should carry with her, in order to secure its safety. The strange misformed urchin sat like an ape, mounted on a very remarkable milk-white steed, of noble courage and beautiful proportions, and whose action was in no degree inferior to his beauty. As this fine animal had been accustomed to carry Gibbon More himself for some years before his death, it was not wonderful that Bigla should have ridden up to caress him ere the march began, and whilst she did so she contrived to give some secret orders to the rider, which did not appear to have been poured into a deaf ear.

The sun was nearly in the meridian before the party reached that point on the edge of the high plain, immediately over the double valley of the rivers Findhorn and Divie. There, as you know, a grand and extensive view of these romantic twin glens is to be enjoyed, together with the broad, rich, and beautiful vale that is formed by their union, with the majestic combined stream winding away through it, between its rocky, irregular, and wooded banks, till it is lost amidst the vast extent of forest stretching widely along both sides of it, as it proceeds on its course towards the fertile

plains of the low country of Moray, and its distant firth, the whole being bounded by the blue mountains of the north. Bigla had seen this glorious prospect more than once before, but she was an enthusiastic lover of nature, and, consequently, she was not sorry when she heard the Laird of Logie propose that they should alight for a few moments to rest themselves, and that they might enjoy it, at greater leisure, and with more ease to themselves. Logie did not make this proposal without private reasons of his own. Having contrived to seat himself apart with Bigla, he began to urge his passion with an energy which he had never ventured to employ before, and after using every argument that he thought might be most likely to prevail on her to yield to his suit, he seated her again on her palfrey, and as he rode down the wooded steeps by her side, he continued to press her eagerly on the same subject, without taking the trouble to use the delicacy of speaking in a tone which might have rendered their conversation private from those with whom they travelled.

"If you will only consent to be mine, fair Bigla," said he, "I will make you mistress of as much of

the bonny land of Moray as your bright eyes can reach over."

"I knew not that thy patrimony had been so ample," said Bigla, coldly.

"Put your fate and mine upon the peril of this condition then," said Logie eagerly.

"I trow I might safely do so, were I to bar all trick," replied Bigla.

"Nay, then, thou art pledged to stand to the bargain," said Logie.

"I am pledged to nothing," replied Bigla haughtily.

"Ha, look there now, gentlemen!" cried Logie. "My fair ward and kinswoman Bigla Cumin here hath pledged her own pretty person to me, on condition that I shall make her mistress of as much of bonny Moray-land as her beauteous eyes can reach over. Now—how say you? Let her cast her eyes forward, and you will all bear me witness, my friends, that she can now see nothing of which I am not the undoubted owner."

By this time, you must know the cavalcade had descended from the high grounds through the winding hollows of the steep wooded braes, till all the

distant and more extended part of the landscape was lost by the rise of the opposite high grounds, and certainly from the umbrageous recess where they now stood, nothing was to be seen before them but the lands of Logie.

"The joke is very well," said Bigla, "not a little piqued and reddening considerably at the liberty which had been thus taken with her before the men-at-arms who followed them, "But though Moray-land was all thine own from Ness to Spey, I would not have thee if thou wouldst lay it all at my feet."

"Talk not so proudly, mistress!" said Logie, very much nettled. "There are many maidens more than thy marrows, who would be happy to mate with me, though I had nothing but this good claymore for my portion."

"I doubt it not," replied Bigla; "but as I am not one of these, it may be as well perhaps that we talk not again on any such subject."

"A little less haughtiness would have better become thee," said Logie. "You forget that you are not now on Dulnan side; and, moreover, you forget that I am your guardian."

"Nay, it is you who forget that you are my guardian," replied Bigla. "I do feel, indeed,

that I can never forget that thou art so; and, moreover, that there is a cruel difference between an unfeeling guardian and a fond father."

"I am armed with thy father's authority," said Logie, hastily; "and I will exert it."

"By basely taking advantage of it to proffer thine own vile suit," said Bigla.

"To see, at least, that Freuchie's son proffers no more suit to thee, replied Logie. If he took leave of thee last night beyond the barbican, I trow it shall be his last leave-taking of thee."

"Last night!" said Bigla, with surprise.

"Aye, last night," said Logie, bitterly. "Dost think I have not found out your secret meeting? —Had I caught the caitiff his blood should have paid for his impudence."

"'Tis well to boast now, fair sir!" said Bigla, "now that thou hast no chance of any such encounter. Oh, would I were on my bonny Dulnan side again! but I trust that my foot shall soon be on its flowery turf."

"That shall be when thou hast my permission," said Logie, allowing his passion to get the better of him.

"What! am I so in restraint then?" said

Bigla, taking a scarf from her neck, and waving it behind her head in such a way, that it was hardly perceived to be a signal by any one but Archy Abhach. He no sooner observed it, however, than he began to rein his steed backwards, until he fell behind the line of march.

"Aye, bold girl, thou shalt obey me ere long as thy husband as well as thy guardian!" continued Logie.

"Sayest thou so?" said Bigla, putting on her Arabian to a gentle canter over the meadow towards the ford of the Divie, whither they were then going, so as to rid herself in some degree of the throng by which she had been surrounded. Then turning in her saddle, she shouted aloud—"Ride, Archy, for thy life, man! Ride! ride! Men of Glenchearnich, follow your mistress.—Come, Aggy, spur with me, and may Saint Mary be our guide!"

And with these words she and her maid boldly dashed their steeds, breast deep, into the ford, and quickly stemmed the stream of the Divie, whilst the well-tutored Archy Abhach wheeled his horse suddenly round at her word, and, drawing his dirk, he pricked his milk-white sides till the red blood

spurted from them, and the noble animal darted off, with his flea-bite of a burden, towards those wooded braes, down which they had so recently come. The Laird of Logie and his followers stood for some moments astounded on the mead, before they could determine what to do. On the one hand fled the lady; and on the other hand, the charters of her lands—her bonds—and her wadsets were already winging their way upwards through the woods; and the question was, which of the two objects of pursuit was the most important. Even after he had gathered his scattered recollection, Logie stood in doubt for a time. At length, seeing that Bigla Cumin had taken the direction of the house of Logie, so that he was still left, as he reckoned, between her and her own country, he quickly made his selection.

"After that miscreated devil on the white horse!" cried he. "Take the caitiff and the *kist* he carries!—take him dead or alive!—but, at all hazards, take the kist!"

Off went the laird and his people helter-skelter after Archy Abhach, whilst the followers of Bigla Cumin were left at liberty to become her followers indeed. The waters of the Divie frothed and

foamed again as they dashed through after her. I need not tell *you*, gentlemen, who know the *carte de pays* so well, that although Bigla rode off at first in the very direction in which the laird had wished her to go, I mean towards his own house, she had no sooner forced her way up the steep narrow path leading from the ford, than she found herself in a position where she had it in her power to choose between two ways—one stretching straight onwards towards the house of Logie, and the other leading directly back over the hills to the eastward of the Divie towards her own country, by a route different from that which she had travelled in the morning. There she stood for some moments on a conspicuous point, overlooking the valley. But you may easily guess that she stopped not from any doubt that possessed her as to which of the two ways she should take—she only waited till her panting followers had clustered around her,—for they had no sooner gathered than she waved her scarf again, and, amidst the shouts of her men-at-arms, she turned her horse's head to the hill, and began to breast it most vigorously. Logie beheld her manœuvre, and it shook his purpose for an instant. He gave hurried and contra-

dictory orders, which only had the effect of slackening the pursuit after the urchin page, and Bigla had the satisfaction of seeing that faithful creature shooting far up among the bowery braes ere any final decision had been taken by the laird. At length, a small clump of horsemen were sent off towards the ford to pursue Bigla, whilst the remainder, with Logie at their head, renewed their chase after Archy Abhach and his precious casket.

"Who is he, think you, that rides hither with so much haste from the pass of Craigbey?" demanded Sir John Grant to the man-at-arms on watch, as he stalked along the bartizan of his castle to take a look over the country, about the time that the sun was hastening downwards to hide himself below the western horizon. "If mortal man it be who looks so like a speck on the saddle, he either rides with hot news to spur him on, or he has some enemy after him," replied the man.

"By'r, lady, but you have guessed right well," said Sir John; "for see! there comes a straggling line of some dozen of horsemen rattling like thunder through the pass."

"Methinks that the elf who flies bears some strange burden behind him," said the man-at-arms.

"He doth so, indeed," said Sir John.

"Some common thief, I'll warrant me, who hath carried away a booty from some usurious burgher of Forres," said the man-at-arms.

"Be he what he may, his white horse is no carrion," said Sir John. "How the noble animal devours the ground!"

"He is as like old Gibbon More's favourite horse as one egg is to another," said the man-at-arms as he drew nearer.

"Gibbon More's, saidst thou?" exclaimed Sir John; "and, by all that is good, he that rides is like my faithful page—but see, he turns this way. Let's to the barbican," and, taking three steps down the narrow stair at each stride, he was at the barbican in a few moments.

"What, ho!" cried Sir John, as the horse came galloping up to the gate. "What, ho! Archy Abhach, is it you? What news of thy mistress?"

"I have neither time nor breath to speak of her at present," cried Archy, leaping from his horse,

and hastily unbuckling the little charter-chest from behind the saddle of his reeking horse; "but here!—catch!—there you have her charters and titles, being that which I reckon some of the people who are after me would think the best part of herself.—There, catch, I say!" and, with that, he threw the precious box clean over the top of the wall.

"Soh!"—continued Archy, taking a long breath—"I have done my lady's bidding like a true Cumin, and now I must draw to defend mine own head, like a true Grant, for the knaves will be upon me."

"Thou shalt not long lack help my brave little fellow!" cried Sir John,—and, in a moment, a party of armed Grants came crowding out from the gate at the heels of their young chief. And, as Archy's pursuers came up one by one, they collected into a knot on the top of the heathery hillock, and then filed off without ever daring to come within bow-shot of the walls.

"Now, tell me what has befallen the Lady Bigla?" cried Sir John Grant, impatiently addressing the page.

The faithful Archy Abhach gave him a brief outline of all he knew.

"To horse! to horse!" cried Sir John, hardly waiting till he had finished; "Holy St. Mary! she may be lost if we tarry."

A very few minutes only were expended ere Sir John and his troop were mounted and away. They galloped after the retiring Cumins, but they could see nothing of them any where. He had got to the side of the hill of Craigbey, and was stretching his eyes in all directions, when the distant clash of conflict came up through the woods that sloped away into the glen to the right. Sir John gave the spur to his horse, and dashed down through the thicket, calling to his men to follow him. In a grassy holm, by the side of a small stream, he found Bigla Cumin surrounded by her faithful but small band of followers, who were bravely defending her against a superior body of assailants. His sudden appearance immediately dispersed her enemies, and, overpowered by the fatigue occasioned by her long wearisome and rapid flight, as well as by the alarm which she had endured—she slipped from her palfrey, and sank exhausted on the ground. Sir John Grant was

soon on his knees beside her, to support her weakness, and to calm her agitation. She had owed her escape, in the first place, to the swiftness and endurance of her favourite Arabian blooded palfrey, together with her own wonderful hardihood as a horsewoman, which, much surpassing that of the Lady Juliana Berners herself, had carried her over mountain and moss, through bog and stream, in a manner altogether inconceivable; and, secondly, to the appearance of Sir John Grant, just as she had been attacked by a quickly formed ambush of the retreating Cumins, whose onset had given time to those who pursued her to come up, by which means she and her people being hemmed in on all sides, would have been speedily overcome.

Ere the evening closed in, Bigla Cumin found herself safely housed within the walls of Castle Grant; and the very next day the priest's blessing gave to Sir John Grant her fair hand, and with it her fair lands too.

VELVET CUSHIONS.

CLIFFORD.—Well done, Bigla Cumin! If ever I marry, I am resolved to have a fearless wife, who can gallop across a country. But hey!—(*stretching himself as we arose to proceed*)—I protest I am quite stiff. Confound your green velvety grass!—commend me rather to your velvet cushion of Genoa. Your story was too long, Mr. Macpherson, and by far too interesting for a breezy hill side, and a dewy bank like this.

DOMINIE.—It will grieve me sore, Mr. Clifford, if you should in any way suffer from my prolixity.

CLIFFORD.—Tut, man, I'd sit in a snow wreath, or on a glacier, to listen to you. But, hark ye!

What was that you muttered, before you began your story about leaving us?

DOMINIE.—Really I cannot speak it without vurra great pain, Mr. Clifford; but my path disparts from your road a little way on here. I have to wend my way through the whole extent of these wild forests, which you see below us there, stretching across the intermediate country between us and the misty Cairngorums yonder. I am journeying to visit a brother of mine, who, as the elegant author of Douglas hath it,

> ——————" Feeds his flocks,
> A frugal swain,"

on the slopes of the mountains beyond.

CLIFFORD.—Nay, nay, we cannot part with you so. Had it been a lady, indeed, that you were going to visit, I should not have said a word. But for a brother merely.

DOMINIE, (*with the tear swelling in his eye.*)—Pardon me, Mr. Clifford—pardon me; but I have an affection for my brother which few can estimate. We were twin bairns. Ewan and I alone remain of all our family. I make a yearly journey to visit him.

CLIFFORD.—I venerate you for your feelings, and I sympathise with them from the bottom of my heart. But, if I may make a guess at the geography of the country before us, I should conceive that if we could persuade you to go with us to Tomantoul to-day, your walk from thence to your brother's to-morrow would be but short.

DOMINIE, (*hesitating.*)—Hu—um!—that may be, sir. I am sure I am vurra happy in your company; but, may I ask, gentlemen, what your plans are?

CLIFFORD.—We tie ourselves to no plans. For aught we know we may be in Switzerland or Sweden before this day month. But, at present, we propose to proceed up the Glen of the Aven to-morrow, on our way to Loch Aven.

DOMINIE.—It is a wild place, and the way is not easy to find.

AUTHOR.—Wild enough, indeed. I once wandered all round it; but I never approached it by its own glen.

DOMINIE.—I would have fain gone with you as your guide, for well do I know every mountain, moss, rock and well by the way. But I cannot

mistryst my brother, who is expeckin' me about this time. Albeit, as I cannot go all the way myself with you, I would fain, before I quit you, put you into the hands of one who is well acquainted with all the mountain tracks and passes, that there may be no risk of your losing yourselves amidst those savage Alpine solitudes.

CLIFFORD.—Ah! that would be kind of you indeed.

GRANT.—Had you not better consent to spend this night with us at Tomantoul, then, Mr. Macpherson.

DOMINIE.—I was just thinking in my own mind, that I behooved so to do. I can then see you as far up Strathdaun to-morrow as Gaulrig, where old Willox the Wizard lives, and there——

CLIFFORD.—What? a wizard, said you? You don't mean to put us under the guidance of Satan, I hope. That would indeed be sending us to the ——.

DOMINIE.—No, no, Mr. Clifford; but there is a friend of mine, who lives near to old Willox, one Archy Stewart, a retired serjeant, who will be just the man for your purpose, if we can find him

at home. He knows every inch of the mountains, and, moreover, he is as full of old stories as an egg is full of meat.

CLIFFORD.—The very man for us. But what can you tell us of old Willox the wizard? I hope we shall see him.

AUTHOR.—I have often heard of him. His name is MacGregor, is it not? I should like much to see him.

DOMINIE.—You will be sure to see him if you call at Gaulrig, for, as he is now above ninety, he is too old to leave home. He is worth the seeing too; for although, as I need not tell you, gentlemen, he never possessed any supernatural power, yet his cleverness must have been great to have enabled him to make the whole country, far and near, believe, even in these more enlightened days, that he can divine secrets and work wonders by means of his two charmed instruments—*the mermaid's stone*, and the enchanted *bridal of the water-kelpie*.

CLIFFORD.—How the deuce did he get hold of such articles? and what sort of things are they?

DOMINIE.—You will easily persuade him to show them to you; and it will be better for me to

leave him to tell his own story about them. But, as I have now made up my mind to go on with you to Tomantoul, gentlemen, I can tell you a short anecdote or two of him as we journey on our way, which will show you that all his fame as a warlock really rested on his own natural acuteness.

CLIFFORD.—I could have guessed as much, methinks, without being any great conjuror myself. But let us have your anecdotes, if you please.

DOMINIE.—I had much information about Willox from the Rev. John Grant, late minister of Duthel, who was acquainted with him for many years. For, notwithstanding the warlock's reputation for the possession of uncanny qualities, he was uniformly consorted with and treated as a gentleman by all the gentry of this Highland country. My old and worthy, and kind and benevolent friend, Mr. Grant, was a man of too much wisdom as well as learning to believe in the supernatural powers of Willox, or any such pretender. Mr. Grant, indeed, was a man of vurra enlarged mind and sound judgment—a deep divine—a classical scholar, such as is seldom to be met with in our poor country of Scotland—an admirable critic—and an elegant

poet; and although what I may be stating regarding him has little to do with what I am going to tell you about Willox, yet, as you may have a chance to hear more of Mr. Grant from my friend Serjeant Archy Stewart when you come to make his acquaintance, I may be allowed to complete my sketch of this remarkable man by saying that, whilst he was pious and regular in his duties, as became a clergyman, he was, nevertheless, cheerful and convivial, and extremely fond of a bit of humour; and, moreover, as he was often called upon to give his opinion pretty strongly in argument, he was equally ready to back it up at any time by his courage and bodily vigour against the brute force or the insults of his opponents, in days, now happily gone by, when even the sacred character of a minister of the gospel did not always proteck his person from injury. To enable him to defend himself the more effectually in such chance encounters, Nature had given to him a stout and athletic frame and a nervous arm, in addition to which he did himself furnish the hand of that arm with a great hazel stick, which he facetiously called his *Ruling Elder*, and so armed, no man, nor set of men in the whole country side could make him

show his back. He was a capital preacher; but many doubted whether his sermons or his cudgel wrought the most reformation in his neighbourhood.

It was observed that Mr. Grant was always peculiarly unfortunate in losing his cattle. Not a year passed that some of them did not die of a strange and unaccountable disease which quite baffled the skill of all the farriers and cow-leaches in the district. But on one occasion the mortality was so great as seriously to threaten the utter extermination of his stock. As this calamity seemed to affect none of his neighbours, and to fall upon him alone, it was not unnatural for his superstitious servants to say that his cattle were bewitched. In their opinion nobody but Willox could cure such an evil.

"If you don't send for Willox, sir, you'll lose every nout beast in your aught," said the minister's hind.

"Saunders," replied the minister, "although I have no faith in any such wicked and abominable superstitions as would gift Mr. MacGregor with superhuman powers, I am willing enough to give him credit for more than ordinary shrewdness and

sagacity as a mere man. You may, therefore, send for him with my compliments, as I believe that he is more likely than any one to discover the natural cause of these my losses."

Willox came accordingly; and after the usual salutations he took the parson aside.

"Between you and me, Mr. Grant," said he, "there is no use in my making any pretence of witchcraft. But you know we may find out the cause of the death of your cattle for all that. Your losses, I think, always happen at or about this particular season of the year?"

"They do," replied the parson.

"Come, then, let you and me take a quiet walk together over your farm."

Mr. Grant and Willox patiently perambulated the farm, and especially the cattle-pastures for some hours together, Willox all the while throwing his sharp eyes around him in every direction, until they came to a hollow place where the warlock suddenly stopped.

"Here is the cause of the evil," said Willox, at once pointing to a certain plant which grew there, and nowhere else in the neighbourhood. "If you will only take care that your man Saunders

never allows your cattle to get into this hollow until the flower of that plant is withered and gone, you will find that you will never again lose a single beast in the same way."

I need not tell you, gentlemen, that Mr. Grant took care that the warlock's advice was strictly followed; and the result was perfectly satisfactory.

CLIFFORD.—A most invaluable wizzard! I wonder whether one might hold a consultation with him on the mysteries of fly-fishing.

GRANT.—I have no doubt he could advise you well.

CLIFFORD.—Nay, it was not for myself that I was asking. I manage to do well enough by means of mine own conjuring rod; but to you and my friend there, some little aid of magic might be useful, seeing you can make so little of it by your own simple skill. But come, Mr. Macpherson, what more of old Willox?

DOMINIE.—A great alarm was created at Castle Grant, in consequence of a strange madness that frequently seized upon the cattle at pasture in the grounds. At such times they were observed furiously running in all directions, with the tips of

their noses and tails in the air, and bursting over all the fences. The easiest solution of this phenomenon was to say that they were bewitched; and all the servants about the castle, especially those who had the broken fences to mend, believed that it was the true one. Even Sir James Grant, worthy man, when brought out to judge for himself, could not deny the grounds at least of this general opinion. To satisfy those who held it, he allowed the aid of Willox to be called in.

"Some trick has been played here," said the warlock, after inquiring into all the particulars, and minutely examining those parts of the pastures where the animals were in the habit of lying most frequently. "Some wicked person has thrown some disagreeable odour among the beasts."

The probability of this was doubted by every one present. Nay, every one declared that such a thing was impossible.

"Well," said Willox, "*I* know that what I say is true; and I'll soon convince *you all* that it is possible. Drive the cattle into the fold."

The cattle were folded accordingly, and Willox walked into the very midst of them. There he took certain ingredients from his pocket, and put-

ting them on a small bundle of tow, he prepared to strike fire with a flint and steel.

"Now, gentlemen," said he, "I advise all of you who have any regard for your own safety to look sharp to it."

The fire was struck, the tow was kindled, a most offensive stench arose, and no sooner had the cattle winded the fumes of it, than they darted off in twenty different directions, as if the burning tow had been the fuse that discharged them from some vast bomb-shell. The poles and other barriers of the fold were shivered and levelled in a moment, as if such an enclosure had never existed. Down went the astonished spectators one by one in detail, as they chanced to come into the diverging lines of flight of the scattering herd. Smack, crash, and rumble went the nearer fences, as the several flying animals went through or over them, like cannon-shot; and by the time the poor wounded, maimed, and crippled people had gathered themselves to their legs, such of them, I mean, as had legs left to stand upon, they beheld, to their utter dismay, the cattle scouring the distant country in all directions.

I need hardly add, that a little farther investi-

gation enabled Willox, without the aid of witchcraft, not only to satisfy every one that his first suspicions had been well founded, but also to prove that they had been so by discovering the offender.

GRANT.—Depend upon it, this warlock must be no ordinary man.

DOMINIE.—I have another anecdote of him. A certain farm house in Strathspey was said to be haunted. Stones and dust and rubbish were thrown into the middle of the family apartment; and no one could discover whence or from what hand they came. Mr. John Grant, the minister of the parish, was sent for to lay the ghost; and to the great comfort of those to whom the house belonged, he came accompanied by Willox.

"While I am engaged in going through the evening family worship," said the parson to Willox, "do you keep your eyes on the alert, and try to ascertain whence the missiles appear to come."

The minister began the duties of the evening. A psalm was sung. During the time the people present were singing it, the volleys were discontinued; but the moment the psalm was ended, the discharges again commenced.

"We had better sing another psalm," whispered Willox to the parson. Mr. Grant immediately gave out some verses accordingly. The disturbance ceased as before; but they were no sooner concluded, than it began again with redoubled fury. The sharp eyes of Willox shot like lightning into every part of the chamber. In an instant they were arrested by one of those great clumsy wooden partitions so common in our Highland farmers' humble dwellings, which, being boarded on both sides, rise up a certain height only towards the bare rafters above, leaving the vast vacuity below the roof undivided from end to end of the building. Willox gave a preconcerted sign to the parson.

"My friends," said Mr. Grant, "I insist that the boxing of that partition be immediately opened up."

His orders were obeyed, and no sooner were the boards removed than the ghost was discovered. A little black Highland herd lassie sat cowring within, her face filled with dread of the punishment that awaited her. The creature had managed from time to time to creep in there, by lifting up a loose plank, and from that concealment she had con-

trived to throw her missiles over the open top of the partition into the apartment, all which she had done to revenge herself against the family for having been whipt for some piece of negligence, of which she had been guilty. The parson had no sooner learned these particulars, than he pounced upon the trembling culprit, like a great mastiff on a mouse, and dragging her forth, he, without the least delay or ceremony, gave her, to use his own phrase, a good *skegging*.

CLIFFORD.—Had Mr. Grant and Willox been sent for, the celebrated ghost of Cock Lane would have had but a short reign of it.

DOMINIE.—I have but one story more of Willox to plague you with. William Stuart, a farmer in Brae Moray, was led, by his father's persuasion, and very much against his own inclination, to marry a woman whom he could not like, all because she possessed a certain tocher. He went to his marriage like a condemned thief to the gallows, and from the very first moment, he treated his wife as an alien. A certain worthy lady in the neighbourhood, who felt interested in Mrs. Stuart, firmly believed that her husband's dislike to her

was occasioned by witchcraft. She, accordingly, sent for Willox, and intreated him to exercise his skill in the poor woman's behalf, and the warlock undertook to do all in his power for her.

Having contrived to pay a visit at Stuart's house, when he knew that he should find him at home, he accepted his invitation to stay to dine with him, and after they had had a cheerful glass together, Willox ventured to begin his attempt by drinking Mrs. Stuart's health.

"You are the only man, Stuart, who does not admire your own wife," said Willox, in a half jocular tone.

"May be so," said Stuart dryly.

"If you were not bewitched, as my skill tells me that you are, you would find more happiness at your own fireside than you do," continued Willox.

"Maybe I am bewitched," said Stuart, from the mere desire of being civil.

"I tell you I know you are," said Willox, "and if you will allow me I shall soon show you the people who have bewitched you."

"Ha! ha! I should like to see them," said Stuart with a forced laugh, "but if you do show

them to me, you are even a greater conjuror than I take you to be."

Willox, with great solemnity, now took forth the mermaid's stone from his pocket. It was semi-transparent, circular, and convex, like an ordinary lens, and it filled the palm of his hand. Placing the back of his hand on the table, and keeping the stone in the hollow of it, he solemnly addressed Stuart.

"If you would know those who bewitch you," said he, "look downwards through the mermaid's stone."

"I see nothing," said Stuart, following his direction.

"Do you see nothing now?" demanded Willox.

"Yes," replied Stuart, "I see something like a red spot.

"Look again, do you see nothing more now?" demanded Willox.

"Yes," said Stuart again, "I see something like a black spot, a little way from the red spot."

"Listen, then!" said Willox. "These are the heads of a red-haired lass and a black-haired lass,

and it is they who bewitch you from your lawful wife."

"If you are not a great warlock, you are at least a great rascal," cried Stuart, losing all temper; "but by the great oath, I'll soon know which you are." And saying so, he suddenly seized on the wizard's hand before he was aware, and turning it up, he extracted two pins from between the fingers, the head of one of which had been dipped in red wax, and the head of the other in black wax.

"You scoundrel," said Stuart, preparing to assault him, "you have been unjustifiably prying into my secrets, but I'll teach you to use greater discretion in future."

"Approach me at your peril!" cried Willox, stepping back towards the door, and brandishing a dagger which he drew from his bosom. "I have done or said nothing but what is friendly to you, and if you have the folly to attempt anything of a different nature towards me, you must take the consequences," and so saying he immediately took himself off. So ended the Dominie.

Our walk to-day had little beauty in it except in its distant prospects, which, when we looked

over the vast extent of fir forests towards the Cairngorum group of mountains, were always grand. The scenery of the Aven, indeed, and especially at the spot where we crossed it, delighted us all. The fragment of the ruined bridge of Campdale still stood, a sad monument of the ravages of the fearful flood of August 1829; but the stream now sparkled away along its customary channel like liquid chrystal.

CLIFFORD, (*stopping mechanically to put his fishing-rod together.*)—It is certainly the clearest stream I ever beheld. Yet shall I try my skill to extract some trouts from it for dinner.

GRANT, (*as we ascended the path that led us up from the deep glen of the Aven where we left Clifford fishing.*)—Anything to be seen at Tomantoul?

AUTHOR.—Nothing that I have ever been able to discover. The site is one of the dreariest I know,—a high, wide, bare, and uninteresting moor, quite raised as you see above all the beauties of the river, which are buried from it in the profound of the neighbouring valley; nor has the village itself any very great redeeming charm about it.

GRANT.—How comes it that all the cottages

and walls are built of sandstone, in the very heart of this primitive country?

AUTHOR.—You may well be surprised, but you will perhaps be still more astonished to learn that the place stands on a great detached isolated field of the floetz strata, four miles in length by one in breadth, which has been raised up on the very bosom of the primitive granite.

GRANT.—A curious geological fact.

AUTHOR.—It is a fact which I learned when I was here formerly, from a very intelligent gentleman who is the clergyman here, to whom I was also indebted for much valuable information during my enquiries about the great flood. I shall be happy to introduce you to him.

GRANT.—I believe similar instances occur elsewhere in this part of Scotland.

AUTHOR.—Yes, at Kildrummie Castle,—in the Glen of Dollas,—and also near the borders of the primitive in the vale of Pluscardine.

DOMINIE.—To what strange changes has this earth of ours been subjeckit!

GRANT.—Tell me, I pray you, what nice looking house is this?

AUTHOR.—It is the residence of the clergy-

man; perhaps you would like to call on him now, while our friend here goes on to the inn with our man to secure beds and entertainment for us all.

Grant assented, and, entering the manse accordingly, we remained talking very agreeably there, until the whistling of Clifford, as he marched up the street with his rod in his hand, and his fishing panier on his back, made us suddenly terminate our interesting colloquy, in order to run after him. As we got into the inn, we found him in the act of admiring his trouts, which filled a large trencher.

Clifford.—See what noble fellows! There is one of three pounds and a half if he is an ounce. I hooked him in the pool above the broken bridge, and I called to you, as you were going up the hill, to come back and witness the sport he yielded, but you were too intent on your own conversation to hear me, and so you lost it all. What *were* you talking about?

Grant.—Geology.

Clifford.—Geology!—fiddlesticks.—By all that is good you deserve to dine upon fossil fishes.

Author, (*to the landlady.*)—Well, ma'am, I hope you can give us something good for dinner.

LANDLADY.—We shall see, sir; we'll do the best we can.

AUTHOR.—You will at least be able to give us an omelet, after the instructions I gave you when I was last in your house.

LANDLADY.—That I can; I made one for the Duke, when he was up here at the fowling, and he said that it was just famous.

CLIFFORD.—Can you give us any soup?

LANDLADY.—Na, sir; I'm dootin' that I hae na' time for that.

CLIFFORD.—Pooh! If you will give me a large smooth white pebble, such as is called by my geological friends here, quartz, but which you know better, I believe, by the name of a *chucky-stane*, I'll make some capital soup out of it in a very few minutes.

LANDLADY.—Odd, sir, I'm thinkin' ye'll be clever an ye can do that.

CLIFFORD.—Be quick, then, and fetch me such a stone as I have described. Remember it must be quite clean, and large enough to make soup for four gentlemen,—and recollect that we are very hungry.

LANDLADY, (*entering with a stone in one*

hand.)—There it is. It's quite clean; for I washed it wi' my ain hands.

CLIFFORD.—So, that is all right. Now, fetch me a pan with clean water in it. Oh, you have it there I see. Well, put in the stone, and put the pan on the fire. Now, you see, my good woman, I am a pupil of old Willox the warlock, therefore you need not be astonished at any thing I do. Go get me a spoon to taste the soup with. (*Whilst her back is turned, slyly dropping a cake or two of portable soup into the pot.*) Aye, now, let me see; taste it yourself. It already begins to have some flavour.

LANDLADY, (*astonished.*)—Have a care o' huz a', so it has!

CLIFFORD, (*stirring it.*)—But, stay a moment, —taste it now!

LANDLADY, (*taking a spoonful of it.*)—Keep me, that *is* just awthegither maygics indeed!

CLIFFORD, (*tasting it.*)—Oh, it will do now. Bring me an iron spoon to take out the stone with. Now, here take it away,—dry it well, and lock it carefully up in your larder; for, you perceive, that it is but very little wasted, and consequently it will make some good tureens of soup yet; and though

such stones are plenty enough, yet you know it is always good housewifery to be economical.

LANDLADY, (*taking away the stone.*)—That's true indeed, sir.

GRANT, (*after we had dined.*)—Well, thanks to Clifford's chucky-stone soup, his delicious *fritto* of trout, our landlady's excellent mutton-chops, and your omelet, we have dined like princes.

CLIFFORD.—I am now hungry for nothing but a narrative. Come, Mr. Macpherson, as we are to lose you to-morrow, I must remind you that you are still in my book for some story about Old Stachcan, the man with the pistol, I mean, whose portrait we saw at Castle-Grant. Pray, do not hesitate to clear off your score.

DOMINIE.—I need not say, Mr. Clifford, that since you and your friends here are so good as to accept of such poor coin as my bit stories, in return for all the kindness and condescension which I have received from you, it is well my part to pay it readily, and without a grudge. But what I had to tell you about Old Stachcan, was more an account of the man, than any very parteeklar story about him. Now, as you will pass by the very bit where he lay concealed, I would rather leave it

to my friend Serjeant Archy Stewart, who knows more about him than I do, to give you his history on the spot.

GRANT.—Well—since that is the case, Mr. Macpherson, I shall undertake to tell a story for you. And instead of that which you were to tell us about *one* Grant, I shall give you a legend which I have heard of *two* lairds of that name.

CLIFFORD.—Provided you do not on that account make your story twice as long as Mr. Macpherson's would have been, I for one am contented.

GRANT.—If I should do so, you have your resource, Clifford, you may go to sleep, you know; and if you do, I shall perhaps have the pleasure of singing, in the words of Scott's Water Sprite,

"Good luck to your fishing."

CLIFFORD.—No more of that, an thou lovest me, Hal.

LEGEND OF THE RIVAL LAIRDS OF STRATHSPEY.

Some time previous to the Reformation a venerable priest, of the name of Innes, lived at Easter Duthel, in Strathspey, and superintended the spiritual concerns of the people of the surrounding district. He was a benevolent old man, whose heart was devoted to the duties of his sacred office, and to those deeds of Christian benevolence which he inculcated upon his flock by example as as well as by precept.

The only other occupation which the good man had was the watching over the nurture and education of his orphan niece, Helen Dunbar, who had been early left to his care by the death of her

mother, his only and much beloved sister. Helen was a beautiful young creature. Her features were of the most perfect regularity of form and arrangement,—her complexion was the fairest imaginable,—the lustre of her dark eyes was softened by their long eyelashes, and her jet-black hair fell in rich abundance over her person, which was in every respect most exquisitely and symmetrically moulded. But what was better than all this, she was as good as she was beautiful. Her whole time and thoughts were occupied in finding out objects for her uncle's benevolence, and, like his ministering angel, she was ever ready to fly to the cottage of the poor, or the bed-side of the sick, to bear thither such comfort or consolation as he had to impart, when the infirmities incidental to his declining years rendered it impossible for him to bestow them in person. When he was able to go upon his own errands of charity he never failed to do so; and on such occasions it was a pleasing sight,—a sight that might have furnished a fine subject for a painter—to have beheld her acting as the crutch of his old age, and the ready auxiliary of all his beneficent actions. You may easily believe that

so amiable a pair as Priest Innes and his niece could not fail to secure the love and admiration of every one who knew them.

When they appeared in church, the grey hairs, and the thin, pale, spiritual countenance of the old priest were looked up to by his flock with reverential awe, as if he had been some being who was only lent to them for a brief season from another and a better world, and who might every moment be called on to return thither. But whilst there was enough of heaven in the young and healthful face and form of Helen Dunbar, she was regarded by all with an affectionate attachment which savoured more of the kind and kindred feelings of humanity, and the good folks were thus satisfied through the niece that the uncle was allied to the earth. Fathers and mothers regarded her and loved her as a daughter—young maidens looked upon her with the warmest sisterly affection—and the youths of the district, with whom modesty naturally made her less familiar, beheld her with that respectful adoration which was due to so angelic a creature. I speak, of course, of those of humbler rank; for there were many among the young knights and lairds of the neighbourhood who would have wil-

lingly robbed the old man of his treasure by carrying her home as a bride.

Of this latter class there were two, who, as they were the most remarked of the admirers of Helen Dunbar, were also believed to be the most formidable rivals to each other: These were Lewis Grant the young laird of Auchernach, and John Dhu Grant of Knockando. The first of these was a tall, handsome, fair-faced young man, universally believed to be open, brave, generous, and warm-hearted. He had the art of making himself beloved by all who knew him, and people thought that he had no fault in life but a certain degree of hastiness of temper, which, as folks said, might flash out violently upon particular occasions, and yet would pass away as harmlessly as a blaze of summer lightning, leaving every thing peaceful behind it after it was gone. The other was a dark, swart man—properly conducted, and calm and cold looking—whom it somehow happened that nobody knew sufficiently either to like or to dislike. Both of these gentlemen were observed to be very assiduous in their attentions to Helen Dunbar upon all occasions where they were seen in her company. But the talk of the

country was, that if either of them met with encouragement at all, Lewis of Auchernach was rather the happier man. As the fact, if it was a fact, could have been known to himself and the lady alone, this suspicion probably arose partly from the circumstance that Auchernach was the general favourite, and partly because his place of residence was nearer to the parsonage of Easter Duthel by some fifteen or twenty miles or so, than that of his rival. But I, who as a narrator of their story, am entitled to arrogate to myself a perfect knowledge of all their secrets, and in virtue of such my office, to be present at, and to describe scenes witnessed by no eyes but those of the actors themselves, I will venture to assure you, upon my own authority, that public opinion, however rarely it may be correct, was in this instance the true one, and that Lewis Grant of Auchernach had really for some time been the favoured lover of the fair Helen Dunbar; that they had already plighted troth to each other; and, moreover, that their mutual love was neither unknown nor disapproved of by the lady's venerable uncle.

You will easily guess, from what I have already told you of the good priest of Easter Duthel,

that he was not one of those sour sons of the church who think that it is their duty to keep as much aloof from their flocks as they possibly can, and who would consider it as quite unclerical to appear capable of participating in their harmless amusements, who think it better to allow rustic enjoyment to run into what riot and excess it may, than to hallow and temper it by the sacredness of their presence. Priest Innes and his niece were always invited and expected to be present at all merry-makings; and the consequence was, that he kept many such scenes within the bounds of innocence and propriety, which might have otherwise gone very much beyond their limits. A word from their pastor indeed was at any time sufficient to bring the liveliest and most exciting revel to a decent close.

It happened that a joyous meeting of this sort occurred one night at the mill of Duthel, occasioned by the marriage of the miller's daughter. As the miller was a wealthy man and well known by all ranks, and the bridegroom was highly respectable, the assemblage was graced by many of the lairds and better sort of people along the banks of the Spey; and, amongst others, both Auchernach and Knockando

were there. The matrimonial rite was performed by the good Priest Innes with all due ceremonial. But when the company adjourned to the long granary where the sports of the evening were to be held, and when the harps and the bagpipes began alternately to give animation and joy to the scene, he did not consider that the jocund dance or the merriment that ensued, brought with it any just or reasonable argument for his departure. On the contrary, seated in the chair of honour, his venerable and benignant countenance was lighted up with smiles of pleasure, from the inward gratification he felt in beholding the chastened happiness of all around him.

His niece, Helen Dunbar, sat in a chair by the old man's side, that is to say, she sat there during such intervals as she was allowed to rest from the joyous exercise in which all were participating. These indeed were few and short, because she was of all others the partner most sought after. She danced often with Auchernach, and not unfrequently with Knockando; and from that desire, natural enough to maidens, to veil the true object of her affections from prying eyes around her, she was, if possible, even more gracious that night in

her manner and conversation to the latter than she was to the former. The cold dark countenance of John Dhu Grant was flushed and animated more than it had ever been before, by the seeming preference which was thus shewn to him. Presuming upon that which his passion magnified, he persecuted Helen with attentions, which she now began to see the necessity of repressing. She could not well do this, without throwing more of her favour into the scale of him whom Knockando so well knew to be his rival. This alteration on her part inwardly galled and irritated the disappointed man beyond what his habitual self-command allowed his countenance to express. Lewis Grant of Auchernach, on the other hand, satisfied with his own secret convictions, went on joyfully through the mazes of the dance, perfectly heedless of all those minor changes on the face or manner of Helen which had so touched John Dhu, whose equanimity was not the better preserved, because he perceived how little that of his rival was affected.

"These weddings are mighty merry things, Auchernach," observed Knockando with seeming coolness, as they accidentally stepped aside toge-

ther at the same moment to take a cup of refreshment.

"When or where can we expect mirth, Knockando, if we find it not on a wedding-night?" said Auchernach, after courteously pledging to his health. "The happy union of two devoted young hearts, as yet unscathed by the blasts of adversity, —smiling hope dancing before them,—gilding with sunshine all the brighter prospects of life, whilst her friendly hand throws a roseate veil over all its drearier and darker changes."

"Thou speakest so warmly that methinks thou wouldest fain be a bridegroom thyself, Auchernach," said Knochando.

"So very fain would I so be, Knockando, that I care not if this were my wedding-night," replied Auchernach with great animation.

"Ha! ha! ha! art thou indeed so desirous to barter thy sweet liberty?" said Knockando. Well, then, I suppose that I may look for a spice of thine envy now, should I perchance submit to my fate, and yield to those blandishments which have been so skilfully used to catch me."

"I envy no one," said Auchernach carelessly,

"and sooth to say, very far indeed should I be from envying thee, Knockando,—trust me, no one would dance more heartily at thy wedding than I should."

"Since thou art so fond of dancing at weddings, depend on't thou shalt not lack an invitation to mine," said Knockando; "nay, out of my great friendship for thee, I have half a mind to sacrifice myself and to hasten my fate, were it only to indulge thy frolicsome propensities."

"Kindly said of thee, truly," replied Auchernach, laughing good humouredly, "then sudden and sweet be thy fate, say I."

"If I mistake not greatly, my fate is in mine own hand," continued Knockando, throwing a significant glance across the room towards the place where Helen Dunbar was then sitting beside her uncle.

"What!" exclaimed Auchernach in amazement, hardly daring to trust himself with the understanding of what seemed thus to be hinted at by his rival."

"Thou see'st how her eyes do continually rest upon me as if I were her loadstar," continued

Knockando. "Her solicitation could not be more eloquently expressed by a thousand words."

"Whose eyes?—whose solicitation?" cried the astonished Auchernach, his countenance kindling up with an ire which it was impossible for him to conceal.

"Whose eyes?—whose solicitation?" repeated Knockando. "Those love-encumbered and pity-seeking eyes yonder, which are now darting glances of entreaty towards me, from beneath the dark-arched eyebrows of the beauteous Helen Dunbar. The girl loves me to distraction; and if no other motive could move me, feelings of compassion would of themselves urge me to show some mercy towards her, and to make her my wife."

"Villain!" cried Auchernach, at once losing all command of himself, "thou art a base traducer and a lying knave to boot!"

The previous part of this dialogue had been overheard by no one; but these last words were thundered forth by Auchernach in a voice so loud that they shook the whole room,—stopped music dance and all,—and attracted every eye towards the speaker, just in time to see him fell Knockando to the ground by a single blow.

The confusion that ensued was great. Knockando was raised from the floor by some of his dependants who chanced to be present. Dirks might have been drawn and blood might have flowed, had not the good priest immediately hastened with what speed his tottering steps enabled him to exert, to interpose his sacred person, and to use his pious influence to allay the growing storm. By his authority he now put an abrupt termination to the festivities of the evening. Ashamed of his violence, Auchernach came forward to entreat a hearing from the priest, and at the same time to offer that support to his feeble frame in his homeward walk, which, in conjunction with his niece, he was not unfrequently allowed to yield him, and of which the agitated and trembling Helen Dunbar had hardly strength at that moment to contribute her share. But he was shocked and mortified to find himself rebuffed, and his proffered services refused in a manner at once resolute and dignified.

"No!" said the priest, waving him away, until thou shalt humble thyself, and make thy peace with Knockando, thou canst have no converse with me; and to prevent the chance of his

suffering farther insult or injury from thine intemperance, he shall be my guest for to-night. Give me thine arm, Knockando."

"Old man! look that thou dost not pay dear for thy favour to that new guest of thine!" cried Auchernach aloud, and gnashing his teeth in the vexation and bitterness of his heart.

"What! dost thou threaten?" said Knockando, coldly, as he left the place. "This way, reverend sir, lean on me, I pray thee."

"Villain! villain!" muttered Auchernach, striking his breast with a fury which now knew no bounds, and, rushing out like a madman, he hurried homewards, to spend a sleepless and agitated night.

The miller's guests departed to their several abodes, wondering at Auchernach's strange and unaccountable conduct, talking much of it, and no one blaming him the less that his furious and apparently uncalled for violence had so rudely and so provokingly put an end to their evening's merriment.

John Dhu Grant was hospitably entertained and lodged by the priest; but Helen Dunbar allowed him to mount his horse next day, to ride home to

Knockando, without ever permitting him to be once gladdened by the sunshine of her countenance. As she had wept all that night, so she sat all the ensuing morning in her chamber, brooding over the distressing scene of the previous evening, and anxiously listening for the footsteps of Auchernach, in the hope that he might come to give her some explanation of the cause of the strange ungovernable fury to which he had given way. But he came not.

"I had hoped to have seen our friend Auchernach here in tears and repentance," said Priest Innes mildly to his niece, when they at last met; "I fear he hath hardly yet come to a due sense of his error."

Helen was silent and sorrowful. She still trusted, however, that he might yet come. Her ears were continually fancying that she heard his well-known step and voice, and they were as perpetually deceived. The whole day and the whole evening passed away, and still he came not. With a sad heart she accompanied her uncle to his chamber, to go through those religious duties with him, in which they never failed to join before they separated for the night. Her voice trembled as she

uttered her responses to the prayers of the priest, and the old man, participating in her feelings, and fully sympathising with her, was little less affected. But her self-command altogether forsook her, when, after the prescribed formula of service was at an end, her uncle again kneeled down reverently on the cushion by his bed-side, and prayed fervently for her and for her future happiness, and that the Almighty protection might be extended over her when it should please Heaven to remove him from this earthly scene. And when, as connected with this dearest object of his heart, he put up earnest petitions for him who was already destined to be her husband and protector, she hid her face on the bed, and sobbed aloud. He besought his Creator so to deal graciously with the erring youth, as to make him deeply sensible of the wickedness of so readily yielding, as he had recently done, to the violence of passion; and he implored the Divine Being to render his repentance sincere and enduring, so that he might never again be led to sin in the same way.

"I forgive him already!" said the good man, as he gave his niece his parting embrace; "I forgive him, and so will you, Helen. And if I have

been too hasty in judging *him*, as in mine erring nature I may have been, may God forgive *me!* Bless thee, my child! and may the holy Virgin and her angels hover over thy pillow!—Good night!"

Helen's tears prevented her from speaking, and after partially composing herself, she arranged the simple uncanopied and uncurtained couch which her uncle used, in obedience to his rigid rule, smoothed his pillow, placed a carved ebony crucifix, with an ivory figure of the Redeemer attached to it, on the little oaken table that stood by his bed-side, and after trimming his night-lamp, she set it before the little image, and having laid his breviary and his beads beside it, she placed the cushion so that he might the more easily perform those religious rites which his duty prescribed to him, and which he regularly and strictly attended to at certain watches of the night; and having done these little offices, she again tenderly embraced him, and retired to her own chamber.

The good priest's mind was so filled with distress about Auchernach, that he could not close an eye. For several hours he lay turning over and over in his thoughts those prospects which his

niece had before her from such a marriage—a marriage, the contemplation of which had so recently laid every anxiety of his heart regarding her most satisfactorily to rest, all of which were now again awakened afresh by the unfavourable view which last night's experience had given him of her future husband. In vain he tried to court slumber. At last, when nearly worn out with watching, he arose and kneeled before the emblems of his faith, to perform his midnight orisons. When these were concluded, he took up the crucifix with veneration, reverently kissed the image of our suffering Saviour, and, laying himself again down in bed, he covered himself with the clothes, and, placing the crucifix lengthwise upon his bosom, he committed himself in thought to the protection of his patron-saint, and composed himself confidently to rest, under the conviction that he should now be certain of enjoying sweet slumber.

And the good man was not mistaken. Sleep immediately weighed down his eyelids, and his senses were soon steeped in the deepest and most perfect oblivion. If you will only fancy to yourselves his venerable and placid countenance, pale as the sheet which partially shrouded his chin, and ren-

dered yet paler by its contrast with the black cap which he wore, his motionless form disposed underneath the bed-clothes, with the crucifix lying along over it, you will be ready to admit that his whole appearance might have well suggested the idea of a saint.

But the devil was that night abroad. The priest's habitation was humble, and, though partly consisting of two low stories, the roof was composed of a simple wattle, covered with heather thatch. His chamber was above, and away from those of the other inmates, at one end, where a lower shed was attached to the back of the building. Suppose yourselves, for a moment, invisible spectators of a scene which was alone looked down upon by that eye which sees all things. Listen to that strange deafened sound above, as if some one was crawling over the outside of the roof. What noise is that as of a cutting and plucking up of the heather? Ha! did you see that dirk-blade glisten through the frail work of the wattle?—again, and again, it comes! It rapidly cuts its way in a large circle through the half rotten material of which the roof is composed. The fingers of a hand now appear under it, as if to prevent the piece

which is about to be detached from falling downwards, and alarming the sleeper. He hears not the noise, for he sweetly dreams, that as he prays on his knees, the clouds are opened, and the beatified countenance of his patron-saint smiles upon him from the skies, and beckons to him to throw off his mortality, and to join him in the Heavens.—He awakes with the effort which he makes to obey him; and, immediately over his bed he indistinctly beholds, by the feeble light of his night lamp, the stern and remorseless features of a man,—the eyes glaring fearfully upon him. He is paralyzed by the sight; and, ere he can move, nay, ere he can utter one shriek of alarm, the murderer drops upon his bed, and, crouched across him, he, with his left hand, lays bare the emaciated throat of the old priest, and with his right he strikes his dirk blade through it, till it pierces the very pillow underneath. No sigh escapes from the murdered man. If groan there be at all, it comes growling from the ferocious heart of the fiend who does the atrocious deed; who, as he sits for a moment to satisfy himself that his victim is really dead, shudders to look upon his own bloody work. To shut it out from his eyes, even for the instant, he replaces the bed-

clothes over the chin, and, adjusting the crucifix as he found it, he makes a precipitate retreat through the orifice in the roof by which he entered.

If you have well pictured to yourselves the particulars of this most revolting murder, you will be the better able to imagine the scene that took place next morning,—when, at the hour at which she usually went to awake her uncle—to receive his kiss and his blessing—to inquire how he had passed the night—and to administer to his little wants, his affectionate niece softly entered the apartment of the good Priest Innes. Her eyes were naturally directed at once to the bed, so that the hole in the roof above escaped her notice.

"How tranquilly he sleeps!" whispered she—"I almost grudge to awaken him to the recollection of that distressing event of the evening before last, which so disturbed him, and which hath ever since so tortured me. I see, from the crucifix being laid on his bosom, that the earlier part of his night hath not been passed with the same composure as he now enjoys. But it is late, and he may chide me if I allow him longer to slumber.—Uncle!—dear uncle!—it is time for you to

be up. Ha!—still he answereth not!—can he be unwell?"

Snatching up the crucifix with one hand, and gently removing the bed-clothes from her uncle's chin with the other, the harrowing spectacle that presented itself told her the fatal truth. She stood for one moment petrified by the sight—uttered one piercing shriek that penetrated into every part of the humble dwelling, and then she fell backwards on the floor in a swoon, where the old woman, Janet, who waited on her, and James, the priest's man, both of whom came running to her aid at the same moment, found her lying, with the crucifix firmly and spasmodically embraced over her bosom.

You all know how fast ill tidings travel. The particulars of this horrible transaction, multiplied and magnified, quickly spread far and wide, and the whole neighbourhood was instantly in a ferment. The lamentations for their priest—their father—and their friend—were loud and heartfelt, and the execrations which were poured out on his murderer were deep, and were mingled with unceasing cries of vengeance. But, on whom

were they to be avenged? Who was the person most likely to have committed so foul a deed?—a murder in every respect so unprovoked, and so perfectly without any apparent object, committed on an innocent and pious man, who could never have been supposed to have had an enemy! It could have been the work of no common robber, for the few small articles of value which the priest's chamber contained were left untouched. The outrageous conduct of Lewis Grant of Auchernach, on the evening of the previous night, at the wedding at the miller's—conduct which had already been talked of and discussed with no inconsiderable degree of reprobation by every one who had seen or heard of it, now came fresh into the minds of all. The vengeful threat which he seemed to have directed against the innocent and pious Priest Innes, in return for his calm and fatherly rebuke, was now remembered by every one. The very words had been treasured up by many of them, and were repeated from mouth to mouth—"*Old man! look that thou dost not pay dear for thy favour to that new guest of thine!*" Uttered as they had been with the gnashing teeth of frantic passion, and with rage and revenge flashing from his eyes, they were

too plain to be mistaken. High in favour as Auchernach was well known to have been with the pure inhabitants of the priest's dwelling, his violence was very easily explained by the jealousy which it was natural to suppose must have been excited in him by the visible preference which had been that evening given by Priest Innes to his rival, John Dhu of Knockando, a circumstance to which his threat had so distinctly pointed. The grounds of suspicion against him, therefore, were too evident—too damning to be for one moment doubted—and he who, two short days before, had been respected and beloved by all who knew him, was at once condemned by every one as a cool, deliberate, sacrilegious murderer. A hue and cry was immediately raised for his apprehension, and off ran the whole population, young and old, and of both sexes, to secure, or to witness his capture, leaving no one to attend to the afflicted Helen Dunbar but her old woman Janet.

But strange as it may seem, after the people had been gone for some considerable time in hot search of the felon, Lewis Grant himself rode slowly up to the priest's house. For some reason which he best knew, he came by a road quite dif-

ferent from that which should have brought him directly from Auchernach. He seemed gloomy and thoughtful—his head hung down—and as he walked his horse up to the stable and dismounted, as he was often wont to do, to put the beast with his own hand into the stall with which it was sufficiently familiar, his eyes glanced furtively in all directions, from under the broad bonnet that shaded his brow. Having disposed of the animal, he shut the stable door, and, with a downcast look and chastened step, very much unlike that which had usually carried him over the same fragment of ground, and with a sigh that almost amounted to a groan, he presented himself at the little portal of the house. With a hesitating hand, he lifted the latch, and with his limbs trembling beneath him, he moved softly along the passage that led to the priest's parlour. He halted for a moment irresolutely at the door of that little chamber where he had passed so many happy days and hours. At last he summoned up courage enough to open it, and he stood on its threshold with his eyes thrown upon the ground. Silence prevailed within, till it was broken by a deep convulsive sob. He looked up, and he beheld old Janet, with her back towards

him, kneeling beside a low couch placed against the opposite wall; and upon its pillow, and stretched out at length upon it in a state which left him in doubt whether she was dying, or already dead, lay the grief-worn countenance and the form of Helen Dunbar. He was struck dumb by this spectacle.—He stood amazed, with the blood running cold to his heart. But recollection soon returned to him—his whole frame shook with the agitation of his feelings, and, clasping his hands in an agony, he rushed forward and threw himself on his knees before the couch. The humble domestic was terrified to behold him, and started aloof at the very sight of him.

"Helen!—my life!—my love!" cried he in a frantic tone—"can I—can I, wretch that I am—can I, murderer that I am!—can I have brought death upon my beloved!—Oh, answer me!—gaze not thus silently upon me with that fearful look!—Am I then become in thy sight so accursed?—Oh, mercy!—mercy!—look not so upon me!"

He tried to take her hand. His very attempt to do so seemed instantaneously to rouse her from the stupor in which she had hitherto lain. She

recoiled from him back to the wall, as if a serpent had stung her, whilst her fixed eyes stared, and her lips moved without sound, as if she could find no utterance for the horrors that possessed her.

"Is there no mercy for me?" cried Auchernach again.—"Hast thou doomed me to destruction?—Am I to be spurned by thee as I was by thine uncle Priest Innes?"

A prolonged and piercing shriek was all the reply that his frantic appeal received from Helen Dunbar. It was echoed by her old attendant, and mingled with loud cries for help. Steps were heard pattering fast without—Auchernach started up to his feet.—The steps came hurrying along the passage—several men burst into the chamber—they stood for a moment in mute astonishment. Then it was that Helen Dunbar seemed to regain all her dormant energies. She sprung from the couch—retreated from Auchernach—and gazing fearfully at him, with her head and body drawn back, she pointed wildly towards him, with both her outstretched arms and hands—and whilst every nerve was convulsed by the torture which her soul was enduring, she at last found words to speak.

"Seize him!—Seize the murderer of mine

uncle!"—she cried, in a voice which rang shrilly and terribly in the ears of all who heard her; and altogether exhausted by this extraordinary effort, she would have fallen forward senseless on the floor, had she not been caught by some of the bystanders, who carried her in a swoon to the couch from which she had so recently risen.

Auchernach stood fixed and frozen, as if her words had suddenly converted him into a pillar of ice. He was immediately laid hold of by some of the men, who hastily bound him, and he submitted to be led away, as if utterly unaware of what had befallen him. His horse was taken from the stable—he was lifted powerless into the saddle, and strapped firmly to the animal's back. The crowd of people who had collected, some on horseback, and some on foot, looked upon him with horror, mingled with awe. But no one uttered a word, either of pity or of condemnation. He sat erect, it is true, but it was with all the rigidity of a stiffened corse, for not a feature or a muscle exhibited the smallest sign of consciousness. That night found him, after a wearisome journey, of the scenes or events of which he had no knowledge,—chained, on a heap of straw, on the floor of one of

the deepest dungeon-vaults in the Priory of Pluscarden.

The simple and unpretending funeral of the good Priest Innes had a larger following than that of any person who had been buried from that district for many years, and the silent sorrow which was exhibited by all who beheld it, was not only more sincere, but it was likewise far more eloquent than those louder lamentations, and those otherwise more obtrusive expressions of woe which had arisen around the bier of many a departed knight and laird of Strathspey. His corpse was carried the same road as they had taken the wretched man who stood charged with his murder. It was met at some distance from the Priory by its monks and their superior, who accompanied the procession, chaunting hymns before the coffin, till it was carried into the church. There the services were performed for the dead, and he was laid to rest in his last narrow house, within the cemetery of that religious establishment, where the requiem masses that were sung for his soul went faintly, and with any thing but consolation, to the ears of the wretched Auchernach in his subterranean prison.

Most of the gentry of the neighbouring country

were present at these obsequies, and John Dhu Grant was there amongst others. It was especially remarked, that although his house of Knockando lay directly in the way between Easter Duthel and the Priory, and about equi-distant from the two places, his desire to show respect to the memory of the deceased was so great that he appeared at the priest's house early on the morning of the funeral, and rode with the procession all the way to the place of interment. He, moreover, took a very prominent part in the whole ceremonial. From these pregnant signs the good people naturally argued that there had been a gross mistake in the belief that had hitherto so currently prevailed, as to which of the rival lairds had been really most favoured by Helen Dunbar and her uncle; and the wiser gossips now shook their heads, and looked forward to the time when John Dhu Grant would probably dry up the orphan's tears, and establish her in the arm-chair at the comfortable fireside of Knockando. The Laird himself never did nor said anything which might have contradicted any such supposition; on the contrary, he always spoke and acted as if it was tolerably well founded.

A good many days passed away after the loss of her uncle, before the tide of Helen's grief had gushed from her eyes in sufficient abundance to afford any relief to her deep affliction. Many were the kind hearts that came to condole with her, but some of her more intimate friends of her own sex only had as yet been admitted to her presence to share her sorrows. John Dhu Grant had made repeated journies to call at the house, but his urgent entreaties for admission had been always met by courteous refusals. He came at length one day, and as he stated that he was the bearer of an especial message from the Lord Prior of Pluscarden, Helen could no longer decline giving him an audience. She received him, however, not only in the presence of old Janet, whose long services in the Priest's house had given her most of the privileges and indulgences of an old friend, but also in that of an elderly matron, who had kindly agreed to spend some time with her to cheer her loneliness. You will not be surprised when I tell you that Helen was deeply affected and much agitated when the Laird entered. After she was somewhat composed, and the first preliminary civilities were interchanged,—

"I come, lady, from the Lord Prior of Plus-carden," said Knockando, "and I am the bearer of a message to know, with all due respect and godly greeting, on his part, whether thou art as yet sufficiently restored to be able to undertake a journey to the Priory, that thou mayest give evidence against him who now lieth in a dungeon there, charged with the crime of the most sacrilegious murder of thine uncle, Priest Innes?"

"I beseech thee, sir," said Helen, much affected, and with a trembling and scarcely audible voice; "I beseech thee to tell the Reverend Father, that I do, with all humility, abide his command, and that when he shall see fit to demand my presence, I shall be ready to obey."

"I doubt not that thou art by this time most eager to see vengeance fall speedily upon the foul murderer," said Knockando.

"Alas! no vengeance can restore him to me whom I have lost," said Helen, bursting into a flood of tears.

"But his blood crieth out for vengeance, and it lieth with thee to see it done upon the murderer," said Knockando.

"When the Lord Prior calleth for me, I shall

speak the truth, and let vengeance rest with that Almighty Being who alone beheld the cruel deed!" said Helen, throwing her eyes upwards as if secretly appealing to Heaven. "As for me, I can but weep for him that is gone, and pray to have that Christian feeling supplied to me which may enable me to forgive even — to forgive even his murderer."

"Forgive his murderer!" cried Knockando, with a strange and wild expression. "Canst thou indeed think that thou mayest yet ever be brought to forgive him?—But—no! no! no!" continued he calmly, and with his usual cold manner, and unmoved countenance, "it cannot surely be that thou could'st ever bring thyself to *save* the monster who could allow one passing word of just reproof to wipe out so many years of kind and hospitable intercourse, and who could revenge it by so barbarous and unheard of a murder."

"I said *forgive*, not *save*," replied Helen, in a half choked voice. "The laws of God and of man alike require that the murderer should die; and I shall never flinch from the dreadful but imperious duty which now devolves upon me, to see that justice is done upon the guilty person. But

our blessed Saviour hath taught me to *forgive* even him; and ere he be called on to expiate his crime on earth, may the Holy Virgin yield me strength to pray sincerely for his repentance, so that his unhappy soul may be assoilzied from an eternity of torment."

"What!" cried Knockando, with a recurrence of that wildness of expression which he had already exhibited, "canst thou even contemplate so much as this regarding a wretch, who, lighting down like some nocturnal fiend upon the sacred person of thine uncle, and, reckless of the emblem of Christ which lay upon his bosom——"

"Ha!" exclaimed Helen, suddenly moved as the horrors of the spectacle she had witnessed were thus so rashly and so rudely recalled to her recollection by this ill-timed speech. "What saidst thou?"

"Nay," continued Knockando, "I wonder not that thou shouldst start thus, as I stir up thy remembrance of the bloody and most inhuman act. Methinks thou wilt hardly now deny me that the man who could put aside the holy image of Christ, that he might plunge his dirk into the innocent throat of his sacred servant, must not only die the

death of a felon, but that he can never hope for mercy from him whose blessed emblem he hath outraged."

"Give me air! give me air!" cried Helen faintly, as she motioned to her companions to open the lattice; and then falling back into the couch, she covered her face with both her hands, and was seized with a long hysterical fit of laughter, followed by a convulsive shudder, from which she was relieved by a deluge of tears.

"This is no scene for a stranger to witness," said the lady who sat with her, "nor is the subject which thou hast chosen to dwell on so circumstantially, by any means suited to the weak state of this poor sufferer. I must entreat of thee to withdraw."

"Madam," said Knockando coolly, "I am no stranger. I am here as the messenger of the Lord Prior, and as the friend of the deceased. As that friend to whom the good Priest Innes did manifest his last most open act of confidence. I am here, as it were, by his posthumous authority, as the avenger of his foul murder, and as the protector of his desolate orphan niece; so that hardly even might the orders of the lady herself induce me

to quit this apartment, whilst my duty may tell me that I ought to remain."

"Thine arm, Janet," said Helen feebly; and, with the old woman's support, she slowly arose and moved towards the door.

"Stay, stay, I beseech thee, my beloved Helen!" cried Knockando, eagerly rising to follow her. "Stay, I entreat thee, or say at least when I may return to offer thee my protection—that legitimate protection which thine uncle authorized me to yield thee—that substantial protection which can alone be supplied by him, who hath the rights and the affection of a husband."

"A husband!" cried Helen, turning suddenly round and gazing wildly at him,—"Husband!" and being again seized with the same involuntary laugh, she was hurried away up stairs to her chamber by the women.

Knockando then slowly left the apartment, called for his horse, and departed.

Helen Dunbar kept her bed all next day, and no one was admitted to her chamber but the lady I have mentioned, and her old and faithful Janet. With these she had long, deep, and private talk, regarding all that had passed the previous day.

On the ensuing morning, the Laird of Knockando again came to the house. Janet was immediately dispatched to refuse him admittance. He now came, he said, with a letter from the Lord Prior of Pluscarden, which he trusted would be a passport for him to the lady's presence. Leaving him below, Janet carried it up stairs to her mistress. It was tied with a piece of black silk ribbon, but it had no seal. It ran in these terms:—

"To Helen Dunbar, these,—It being our will and pleasure that the vengeance with the which it doth behoove us to visit Lewis Grant of Auchernach, the murderer of thine uncle, Priest Innes, shall no longer tarry, but descend quickly upon his guilty head, so that the air of our sacred precincts may cease to be poisoned by the foul breath of his life, we do now, by these presents, call upon thee to appear before us here on Tuesday next at noon, to give thy testimony against him. And as the way hither is long and lonely, we do farther give thee our fatherly advice to avail thyself of the kind offer about to be made thee by the bearer of this, our friend, that worthy gentleman, John Grant of Knockando, who promises to shorten thy travel by lodging thee in his house on the previous night, and

to guard thee hither. And so we greet thee with our holy blessing.

"DUNCANUS PRIOR. PLUS."

Helen was much agitated by the perusal of this letter, but after a little consultation, her friend took it upon herself to go down to tell Knockando that the Prior's summons should be obeyed; but that the Laird's offer of protection and hospitality were with all civility declined. After much vain solicitation on his part, Knockando left the house with great unwillingness.

He had not been gone an hour, when the trampling of a horse again sounded in their ears.

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Janet, as she looked from the lattice to ascertain who this new visitor might be; "As I hope to be saved, it is the lay brother who rides on the Lord Prior's errands. What can he want, I wonder?"

Janet hastened down, and soon returned.

"He came the short way over the hills with it," said Janet, putting another letter into Helen's hands.

It bore the large seal of the priory, over the black silk ribbon by which it was bound.

"What can this mean?" said Helen, as with trembling hands she applied the shears to divide the ribbon; "Again a letter from the Lord Prior! But, as I live, in a very different, fairer, and more clerk-like hand, and, methinks, in better terms."

"*To our much afflicted and much beloved daughter Helen Dunbar,—these:*

"Deeply do we and all our brethren grieve for thy cruel affliction. By ourselves, or our sub-prior, we should have ere this visited thee with heavenly comfort, had not weighty affairs hindered. But deem not thyself desolate; for we do hold that our brother, thy much beloved and greatly lamented uncle, the umquhile Priest Innes, (whom God assoilzie!) hath left thee to our guardianship, and, as a daughter of the church, thou shalt be watched with our especial care. We have made it known to all, that, *but* farther delay, we shall, God willing, proceed on Wednesday next, after the hour of tierce, to look earnestly into the mysterious case of the good priest's wicked and sacrilegious slaughter. We beseech thee, therefore, to do thy best, to render thyself at the priory on the forecoming day, that, assured of the best

hospitality that we can provide for thee, thou mayest rest and prepare thee for the trial of the following morrow. Till then we commend thee to the care of God, the blessed Virgin, and Holy Saint Andrew; and with this, our consolatory benediction, we bid thee farewell.

"DUNCANUS,

"Monach. Ordinis, Vallis Caulium, Plus, Prior."

"Haste thee, good Janet," said Helen Dunbar, after she had read the Prior's letter; "haste thee, and see that the honest lay-brother and his beast be well looked to for this night."

Left to themselves, the ladies compared and canvassed the two letters, one of which was so evidently a forgery. They had little difficulty in determining which was the true one. After some consultation, Helen proceeded to pen a proper answer to that which she had last received; and having sent orders to old James to get his steed ready, she dispatched him with it forthwith by that short route over the hills, which the lay brother had taken to bring the Prior's letter to her. And a few lines of reply, which James brought her next day from the Reverend Father himself,

assured her of the safe delivery of her communication.

During the interval which elapsed before the day on which she was to set out for Pluscarden, the Laird of Knockando made two more ineffectual attempts to gain admittance to Helen, and on both of these occasions he sent her urgent messages to come to his house on her way, and to allow him to be her escort on the journey. To these courteous but resolute refusals were given by the matron, who was then her companion, and on both occasions Knockando left the house with a degree of disappointment and mortification which he could not altogether conceal.

The day fixed for her journey at last arrived. Aware of the stern necessity that existed of arming herself with fortitude to undergo all that she had to encounter, she kneeled down, and fervently prayed to God and to the Virgin to aid and to support her. She arose with the conscious conviction that her prayers had been heard, and she met her friend with a quiet and composed countenance. As that lady and Janet were to be the companions of her journey, she calmly issued her directions for getting ready the animals which were destined to

carry them. The table was already spread for their morning's meal, when suddenly a loud trampling of horses was heard, and, ere they were aware, they saw through the casements that the house was surrounded by about a dozen of mounted men-at-arms. Before they had time to recover from their astonishment, their leader threw himself from his saddle, and entered the house and the apartment.

"Knockando!" cried the ladies in astonishment and alarm.

"Fear nothing," said John Dhu Grant, advancing and bowing with his usual imperturbable manner. "I have merely ridden up hither with a handful of brave fellows to guard thee.—Ha!—what's this?" continued he, surveying the ample table which was liberally spread with trenchers, flagons and drinking cups, and provisions of all kinds much beyond what the moderate wants of the two ladies could have required. "It was kind, indeed, to be thus hospitably prepared for our coming. But think not, I pray thee, of my fellows without there, for their hound-like stomachs are already provisioned for the day's toil. As for myself, indeed, I shall make bold to benefit by thy kindness to me, for I

rarely eat at so early an hour as my spearmen do."

"John Grant of Knockando," said Helen Dunbar, drawing herself up with an effort to summon all her resolution, and speaking with great determination, "I lack not thine aid, and I reject it as insulting to me! And touching my hospitality, I tell thee that it is to be given solely to such as it may please me to bestow it upon—not taken, as thou wouldst have it, by a masterful hand. That board was never spread for thee, and thou shalt never partake of it with my good will!"

"These are strong and hard words, lady," said Knockando, coolly seating himself; "they are hard, yea, and sharp too—harder and sharper, methinks, than any thing that I have unconsciously done to offend thee may well have merited. Had'st thou not better unsay them? if not with thy lips, at least by silently seating thyself here beside me, to do me the honours of the table."

"Again I tell thee, that table was never spread for thee!" said Helen, firmly. "Begone, then! and leave it untouched for me, and for such other guests as I may judge to be most fit to seat themselves there."

"Tush, tush, lady!" said Knockando, frigidly. "The good old Priest Innes never meant that this table should be spread for thee without my sitting at it with thee. That very last night we passed together, the worthy man told me that he should leave thee to me as a legacy, together with all his little means. So, lady, I have e'en come to claim thee, and I have brought these rough but staunch spearmen with me, that we may guard thee safely to Knockando, as we would a treasure. There a priest waits to make thee even yet more securely mine own. After which we shall ride together, if it shall so please thee, to Pluscarden, that we may draw down the blessing of holy mother church upon our union, by seeing condign punishment swiftly done on the murderer who now lieth there. Come, lady!—break thy fast, I pray thee, with what haste thou mayest, for thy palfrey waits by this time. Ha!—what stir is that among my people?"

"Thanks!—thanks to Heaven, they come at last!" cried Helen, clasping her hands together with fervour.

"Who comes?" said Knockando, turning to the lattice, and growing deadly pale as he looked out.

"What!—the sub-prior of Pluscarden!—ha! and the bailie too with him, and a strong force of mounted men-at-arms!—What means all this?"

The small plump of men who had come with Knockando were smothered up, as it were, by the long train of horsemen who now filed up and crowded the confined space formed by the modest front of the priest's manse, and the humble out-buildings which were attached to it at right angles. The heads of the houses of Cistertian monks, of which the brethren of Vallis Caulium were but a sect, seldom travelled in later times without all those external emblems of religious pomp which their rules allowed them. Upon the present occasion, the sub-prior and his palfrey were both arrayed in all the trappings to which his official dignity entitled him. Before him appeared a monk bearing a tall and splendidly gilded crucifix, that glittered in the morning sun, and some dozen of the brotherhood came riding after him, two and two, with their white cassocks and their scapularies covered by the black gowns in which they usually went abroad. These carried banners, charged with the arms of the Priory—the figure of Saint Andrew their patron saint—and various other devices. And

a strong body of men-at-arms,—who, as belonging to the regality attached to the Priory, owed service to it as vassals, preceded and followed the procession, under the orders of the seneschal or bailie. A monk dismounted to hold the stirrup of the sub-prior as he alighted at the door, and signing a cross in the air, the holy father forthwith entered.

"The blessing of Saint Andrew be upon this house!" said he, as he stepped over the threshold. "Benedicite, my child of sorrow!" continued he, as he entered the apartment. "Soh!—the Laird of Knockando here! I thought as much. How camest thou, false and lying knave, to use the sacred name, and to forge the sign-manual of our most reverend Lord Prior, to farther thine own vile frauds against this innocent daughter of the church? Surrender thyself forthwith into the hands of this our bailie, that he may take thee prisoner to Pluscarden, where thy delicts may be duly dealt with."

"What ho, there, men-at-arms!" cried the bailie aloud.

In an instant the followers of Knockando were disarmed, and the apartment being filled with the men-at-arms belonging to the church, Knockando

was made prisoner—led out—and bound upon his horse.

"It was well, daughter, that the blessed Virgin gave thee wit to discover and to foil the base tricks of this false man," said the sub-prior.

"Nay, reverend father, but rather let me say thanks be to the Virgin, and to thy timely succour," replied Helen.—"One moment later, and my fate had been sealed. But will it please thee to partake of our humble Highland fare?—and whilst thou dost condescend to taste of the poor refreshment we have ventured to provide for thee, we women, as beseems us, will withdraw."

"Nay, nay, fair daughter!" replied the sub-prior, "thou shalt by no means depart. Were it a meal, indeed, we might see fit rigidly to insist upon our rule. But we shall but taste thy viands, and put our lips to thy wine-cup for mere courtesy's sake. Therefore disturb thyself not. Marry, as we broke our fast scarcely two hours since before leaving Inverallan, where we sojourned last night, we can have but small appetite now. Yet thy board looketh well, and this upland air of thine, in truth, is sharp and stimulating; and, moreover, we should never refuse to partake—moderately I mean—of

the blessings which are furnished to us by a bountiful Providence, yea, even when they are set forth on a table spread, as thine may be said to be, in the wilderness."

Saying so, the good sub-prior seated himself, and set an example to the rest by cutting off and placing on his own trencher the leg and wing of a large turkey—relished it with some reasonably large slices of bacon—and filled himself a cup of wine from a flagon on the table, adding as much of nature's fluid to it as might, with due safety to his conscience, enable him to call it wine and water. The rest of the holy fraternity were not slack in imitating their superior; and after he had thus shown how much the deeds of the church were better than its promises, by doing much more justice to the provisions than his preface had led his entertainer to hope for, Helen and her companions were mounted on their palfreys, and the sub-prior, and his monks and their escort, having got into their saddles, the prisoner was sent on before them well guarded, and they proceeded on their way. The site of the Priory of Pluscarden, as its picturesque ruins now prove, was like that of all the monasteries of the same order, beautifully

retired, lying at the foot of the hills that abruptly bound the northern side of its broad valley, it was surrounded by a square inclosure of many acres, fenced in by a thick and high wall of masonry, the remains of which are still visible. As the day was departing, the setting sun that shed its light athwart the motionless foliage of those woods that hung on the face of the hills behind the Priory, and gilded the proud pinnacles of the building, which arose from the tall grove in the middle of the large area I have described, threw a last ray of illumination on the glittering crucifix as the long dark line of the procession wound under the deep arch of the outer gate, and as it threaded its way among the small gardens into which the area was parcelled out for the several members of the fraternity. By the kind and hospitable care of the Lord Prior, the ladies were soon safely and comfortably lodged in one of the detached buildings on the outside of the wall inclosing the precincts of the Priory, whilst the Laird of Knockando was thrown, a solitary prisoner, into one of the subterranean dungeon vaults within.

Helen Dunbar was that night blessed with sweet

and refreshing rest after the fatiguing journey of the previous day. As her gentle spirit began to return to her towards morning from that world of unconsciousness where it had been laid by the profoundness of her sleep, pleasing visions floated over her pillow. The saint like figure of her venerable uncle, surrounded by a resplendent glory, hovered over her, and smiled upon her from above. Saint Andrew then appeared beside him, and bore him slowly upwards, till both gradually melted from her sight amidst a flood of light in the upper regions of the sky. She awaked in a transport of delight to which her bosom had been for some time a stranger. She arose and attired herself in the sad and simple habit of mourning which she wore, and she threw herself on her knees to ask again for aid from above in the trying circumstances in which she was placed, and then, having partaken of the refreshment which was liberally provided for her and her companions by the hospitable orders of the Prior, she sat patiently waiting for the moment when she should be summoned to attend the Chapter.

The brethren of the Priory had no sooner performed the *tierce*, as those services were called

which took place at nine o'clock in the morning, than the convent-bell rang to call the chapter to assemble. The chapter-house in which this convocation took place was a beautiful gothic apartment, of about thirty feet in diameter, lighted by four large windows, and having its groined roof supported by a single pillar. Arranged on one side were the seats of the members of the holy tribunal. That of the Lord Bishop of the diocese, who had come from his palace at Elgin on purpose to preside over the investigation which was about to take place, was a high gothic chair raised on several steps. Arrayed in his gorgeous Episcopal robes, he sat silent and motionless as if oppressed with the painful subject of the enquiry in which he was to be engaged. On the steps where his feet rested two handsome boys of his choir were seated, one of whom held his mitre, and the other his crosier. On his right sat the Prior, and on his left the Sub-Prior of Pluscarden, attired in their full canonicals, and the other chairs on both sides were filled with those dignitaries and brethren who were members of the chapter. The area of the place was crowded by the monks in their flowing white draperies, together with the lay brothers

in their attire, the extreme interest of the case having prevented every one from being absent who was not in the sick-list of the infirmarer, or occupied with duties from which they dared not to absent themselves. A deep silence prevailed; at last the sound of arms was heard echoing through the lofty aisles of the adjacent church, and a body of spearmen, retainers of the monastery, headed by the seneschal, entered, guarding in two prisoners.

One of these was the wretched Laird of Auchernach, who appeared with his arms loaded with heavy chains. The captivity which his body had endured in his dungeon, and the mental agony which he had undergone, had manifestly done sad havock upon him. He took up the position assigned to him by the seneschal with a subdued yet indifferent air, as if the stream of his life had been poisoned, and that he cared not how soon he should now be called upon to pour out its last bitter dregs.

The black visage of the Laird of Knockando, who was the other prisoner, seemed also to have undergone a considerable change since the morning of the preceding day. It was haggard, and his

eyes were blood-shot as if he had had but little repose during the night. There was a certain expression of mental uneasiness about it, which his habitual air of cold and motionless placidity could not altogether conceal. The two prisoners were placed near to each other in a position a little to one side, and at some distance in front of the tribunal that was about to investigate their respective cases.

"John Grant of Knockando," said the Bishop, whilst a subdued hush ran round among the spectators, "thou hast been brought hither as a prisoner, charged upon very undoubted evidence of having most feloniously forged the sign-manual of the reverend superior of this holy priory, and this for the base purpose of wickedly circumventing an innocent orphan maiden, whom, for her pious uncle's sake, we have been pleased to take under the especial protection of our holy mother church. But as thy delict is one with which we as churchmen may deal in our own good time, we shall for the present postpone and continue thy case, and proceed straightway to our enquiry into the graver and deeper charge touching that crime of a deeper dye, to wit, the most sacrilegious murder of our

pious brother the Priest Innes, of the which, he who now stands on thy left hand is accused,—I mean thee, Lewis Grant of Auchernach. But as thou, John Grant of Knockando, wert present at the last interview which the murdered man had with his suspected murderer only the night before, where that unjust cause of offence would seem to have been taken which whetted the cruel blade of the assassin for its purpose, we would first hear what evidence thou hast to give upon the matter."

"My Lord Bishop, and you most Reverend Fathers," said Knockando, his eye having brightened up as the speaker had proceeded, and who had by this time regained all his wonted coolness and self-possession, "I now stand before this holy tribunal under circumstances the most distressing that can well oppress a human being. I shall at present pass entirely by those charges which have been made against myself; and regarding which I trust I shall afterwards have little difficulty in giving ample satisfaction to my venerable accusers. I shall pass these charges by, I say, because I could not, if I were willing, find room in my mind for anything touching myself, filled, as it at this moment is, with the awful and heavy charge made

against the unhappy man who now stands beside me,—him whom I once called my friend, and for whom, in the weakness of my nature, and in despite of the unjust outrage which he did me on a recent occasion, I still cannot help being agitated by the same friendly anxiety with which I was ever moved on his account. Such being my feelings, I am sure that no one who now heareth me but must pity me, compelled as I thus am to bear an unwilling testimony, the which, I am aware, must grievously tend towards fixing on him the guilt of one of the most unnatural, cruel, and deliberate murders that ever fouled the page of the history of man, and that done, too, on the sacred person of a servant of God, with whom the murderer had for long companied in habits of the strictest intimacy, and in whose hospitalities he had so long and so often shared. But my duty to mankind,—my duty to this venerable tribunal,—and my duty to Heaven, all combine to compel me to speak out the truth, which I shall now do as briefly as I can.

"It is already well known, most Reverend Fathers, that a merry meeting took place at the mill of Duthel on the occasion of the marriage of the

miller's daughter. There, all who were present can bear testimony, that Lewis Grant of Auchernach did, without any cause of provocation on my part—though it may perhaps be well enough urged in his exculpation, that the violence he did me arose from jealousy because Helen Dunbar took greater pleasure in my converse than in his—yet certain it is, that then and there he did most grievously assault me at unawares. The good Priest Innes, who was my most especial friend, and who is now, alas! so much lamented by me, bestowed a quiet word of reproof on the enraged Auchernach, such as a pastor or a father might have well given upon such an occasion. But instead of taking his rebuke with that humble submission with the which it doth alway become a layman to receive the admonitions of the Church, Auchernach, in the ears of all, uttered fearful denunciations against the good old man as he was in the act of leaving the place, leaning, as he was often compelled by his infirmities to do, upon the stay of this arm of mine. It sorely wounds my heart to be thus forced to repeat the very words which he used, seeing that they are of themselves enow to condemn him, but if I should fail of so doing, there is not a person of

any age or sex who was present that night who could not repeat them. They were these ;—' *Old man ! look that thou dost not pay dear for thy favour to that new guest of thine !*' Thus carrying his bitter and most unjust rage from me to the good priest, who was about to show me that hospitality, which, for that night at least, had been denied to himself. He could have made no successful attempt against the good man that night, for I was in the house to act, under Heaven, as his shield from all harm. But the very next night, when I was no longer there—would I had !—to defend him, the murderer comes—and——"

" Thou hast now gone as far as thy knowledge as an eye or ear-witness may bear thee, Knockando," said the Bishop. " When the subject of thy testimony hath been taken down, our brother the sub-prior may go forth to bring in the lady who is our next evidence."

In obedience to the Bishop's order, the sub-prior withdrew, and soon afterwards returned, ushering in Helen Dunbar. As she entered, she was so overcome by the feelings naturally excited by her situation, as well as by the solemn and impressive spectacle before her, that she did not very well

know how she found herself seated in the chair that was placed for her a little to one side, and at such an angle to those of the members of the chapter, so as to permit a full stream of light to fall upon her from a window. Her eyes were thrown on the ground, and she put up a secret aspiration for aid from Heaven during the interval of silence which the judges charitably allowed to give her time to compose herself.

"Helen Dunbar!" said the Bishop, at length slowly addressing her in a deep-toned voice, but with an encouraging manner; "thou already knowest but too well; and, to thine unutterable grief and affliction, that thy uncle, Priest Innes, a godly, and now, it is to be hoped, a sainted son of the church, was, upon the night of the twenty-ninth day of the last month, most cruelly and barbarously murdered, by some one at present unknown. What can'st thou say touching that strong suspicion which doth attach to the prisoner, Lewis Grant of Auchernach, who now standeth yonder?"

"My lord," said Helen Dunbar, looking fearfully round, whilst every fibre of her frame seemed to quiver with agitation, as she caught her first view of the wasted form and countenance of the

unfortunate prisoner, and met his eye, which was now filled with a flitting fire of anxiety, which it had not before exhibited. But she seemed yet more affected by the glance of the Laird of Knockando, who stood beside him. It quite overcame her for some moments. "My lord!—my lord! I—I—"

"Take thine own time, daughter!" said the Bishop cheerily; "and begin, if it so pleaseth thee, with thy recollection of what befel at the wedding at the Mill of Duthel. The prisoner Auchernach did then and there strike down John Grant of Knockando, without cause of provocation, did he not?"

"My lord, he did strike down Knockando," said Helen; "but as I chanced to watch them standing for some time, as if in talk together, I observed their looks; and, were I to judge from what I saw, I should hold that John Grant of Knockando had by his words so chafed Auchernach, and worked upon his dormant ire, as to fret it into the sudden outburst of that flame, the which blazed forth so openly to the senses of all who were then present."

"Was he not rebuked by the good priest, thine

uncle, for the outrage of which he was then guilty?" demanded the Bishop.

"He was, my lord," replied Helen; "and in a sterner tone than he had ever heard the priest use before. But ere mine uncle went to bed, on the evening of that very night in which he was murdered, these ears did privately hear him express a doubt whether he might not have been too hasty in judging him, and he then uttered a fervent ejaculation to Heaven for pardon if he had so erred."

"Heard ye no threat from the lips of Auchernach against thine uncle?" demanded the Bishop.

"I did hear words which in mine agitation at the time I could not well interpret," said Helen. "After the murder of mine uncle, I did, in my distraction, recall and connect these words with the cruel deed which had so swiftly followed them. But certain circumstances did afterwards occur to satisfy me that the words,—'*Old man! look that thou dost not pay dear for thy favour to that new guest of thine!*' were meant by Auchernach as a friendly warning, and not as a threat."

"Against whom then dost thou believe that Auchernach's friendly warning was given? if so thou judgest it to be," said the Bishop.

"Against him who now standeth beside the accused," said Helen Dunbar; and rising from her chair as she said so, she turned round, and drawing herself up to her full height, she regarded the individual she was addressing with a firm and resolute look, and added in a clear, distinct, and solemn voice,—"The warning of Auchernach was kindly meant, and would to the holy saints that it had been taken as it was intended! The warning of Auchernach was meant to guard against the false arts of John Dhu Grant of Knockando there, whom I do here fearlessly accuse as the real murderer of mine uncle!"

The murmurs of astonishment which ran through the assemblage at this most unlooked for accusation, may easily be imagined, as well as the change that took place on the respective countenances of the two prisoners.

"My guardian angel!" cried Auchernach, clasping his hands fervently, and looking tenderly and gratefully towards Helen, his face suddenly flushed with joy.

"Some deep conspiracy against me," murmured Knockando, his countenance changing alternately from the deadly white of guilty fear to the black

expression of fiend-like ferocity. "A deep compact between the murderer and his paramour!—Where can the veriest shadow of proof be found against my perfect innocence of this foul deed?"

"Let the sacred dignity of our tribunal be respected!" said the Bishop sternly; "and let all such unseemly interruptions cease. Proceed maiden!—proceed to offer to us the testimony on which thou art bold enough to make so strange and so determined an accusation."

"My Lord," said Helen, still standing, and betraying deep agitation, as in her modest and respectful address to the Bishop she recalled the appaling circumstances; "I was the first person who entered mine uncle's apartment on the morning which followed the fatal night of his murder. When I did approach me to the bed I fancied that he slept; for, as was not uncommon with him, he lay with the blessed crucifix over his bosom. I lifted the holy emblem in my left hand, whilst, with my right I did remove the bed-clothes from his chin—when—when—when beholding, as I did, the bloody work which had been done upon him, I fell backwards on the floor in a swoon, and so firmly did I grasp the crucifix to my bosom in

mine unconscious agony, that those who came to mine aid, called thither by my scream, found it so placed, and it was carried with me to mine own apartment, and I so found it when my senses were restored to me. That the crucifix had ever lain that night upon mine uncle's breast at all, therefore, could have been known only to myself alone —and to him who, during that fatal night, removed it from his bosom for the purpose of doing the murder on him, and who replaced it there after he had wrought the cruel deed."

"But how can this touch the Laird of Knockando?" demanded the Bishop earnestly.

"My Lord," said Helen, "some days after the murder, the Laird of Knockando did force himself into my presence, under the false pretence of bearing a message from the Reverend Lord Prior. His object seemed to be to whet my vengeance against the person who then lay accused of the murder of mine uncle. It was then, that, in the presence of my friend and my servant, who are both now within the call of this tribunal, prepared to support this my testimony,—then it was, I say, that he used expressions, the which were, for greater security, taken down after he was gone.—

'*The wretch*,' said he, 'The wretch who, lighting down like some nocturnal fiend upon the sacred person of thine uncle, *and, reckless of the holy emblem of Christ which lay upon his bosom*, could put it aside, that he might plunge his dirk into the innocent throat of his sacred servant, must not only die the death of a felon, but he can never hope for mercy from him whose blessed emblem he hath outraged.' None but the murderer could have so circumstantially described this most barbarous deed. John Dhu Grant of Knockando did so describe it. Therefore is John Dhu Grant of Knockando the murderer! On his head the blood of my murdered uncle doth loudly call for that justice which it doth behoove man to do upon it. And may He that died for us all, grant that mercy hereafter to his guilty soul, which his own relentless sentence would have denied to another?"

As Helen Dunbar finished speaking, she fell back into her chair, exhausted by her exertion to fulfil that duty which she had wound up her mind to discharge. The murderer gasped for breath as if he was undergoing suffocation; and his eyes started from their sockets with the terrors which now overwhelmed him. The murmurs which

burst from those who were present being checked by the seneschal of the court, the Bishop ordered Helen's servants, James and Janet, and also her friend, to be all three severally called. Each of them were examined. The members of the Chapter conferred together for a few minutes apart; and after they had resumed their seats on the tribunal, a death-like silence prevailed, and the Bishop, putting on his mitre, and leaning on his crosier, began thus to speak:—

"After the full and patient probing which we have given to this most mysterious case, it must be clear to all men who do now hear us, that this holy tribunal hath before it, as its bounden duty, to dismiss Lewis Grant of Auchernach, discharging him as free from all taint or suspicion of any participation whatsoever in the foul and barbarous murder of our pious brother, Priest Innes. And as it is beyond our power to shut our eyes to the miraculous proof which the Almighty in his wisdom hath caused the very murderer himself to bear towards his own proper condemnation, we have no choice left but to direct our bailie,—the which we now hereby do—forthwith to return John Dhu Grant of Knockando to

the dungeon whence he was taken—thence to remove him by to-morrow's earliest sun, and to convey him, under a strong guard of our men-at-arms, to Elgin, there to be delivered into the hands of the king's sheriff, that he may take measures to see that the prisoner be submitted to the knowledge of an assize, to be by it clenged or fouled of the crime laid to his charge, as the evidence laid before it may determine. This we do without all prejudice to our own claims to the full right of pit and gallows which belongeth to us; but because this crime of murder, when not fresh and red-handed, being to be considered as more especially one of the pleas of the Crown, we do think it more seemly to leave it to the judges of the King's Grace to execute justice upon the murderer."

The Laird of Knockando's countenance was all this time working like that of a fiend, especially whilst the Bishop was delivering this appalling judgment against him. He had no sooner heard it to an end, than, putting his hand into his bosom, he plucked forth a concealed dirk—that very weapon with which he had murdered the good Priest Innes. He raised it aloft. Helen saw it glancing in the air, and uttered a piercing shriek that rang

in the groined roof of the chapter-house. It saved her lover; for, as Knockando brought it down, aimed with a desperate plunge at the heart of his rival, his intended victim threw his body back, and so he most wonderfully escaped from its fatal blade. But it fell not innocuous—it cleft the very skull of a wretched lay-brother, who sat with his tablets below noting down the minutes of the procedure, and the man dropped lifeless upon the pavement. The perpetrator of this second murder was seized and pinioned, and, being instantly tried red-handed as he was—his guilt was established—he was carried out for shrift—confessed that his first crime was done for the wicked purpose of revenging himself against Auchernach by fixing upon him the guilt of the murder. After which the convent-bell tolled dismally. A long procession of monks chaunting a hymn, followed by the criminal and the bourreau, guarded by the seneschal and his men-at-arms, was seen winding from the gate of the Priory, and after a few short moments of prayer, he was forthwith executed, without farther mercy, on the gallow-hill.

I need not tell you that the Laird of Auchernach performed the part of protector to Helen Dun-

bar during her homeward journey, and that so soon as the days of mourning for her murdered uncle were fulfilled, he received from her the right to act as her protector throughout the longer journey of life. And if he had ever been supposed to be apt, when provoked on certain occasions, to yield too hastily to that indignation which chanced to be excited within him, the recollection of the terrible events which I have narrated to you had the effect of arming him ever afterwards with a degree of control over himself which few men since his time have been known to possess.

END OF VOL. II.

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ERRATA.

VOL. I.

P. 24, l. 12, dele the words " to his shoulder"
P. 55, at the bottom, *for* " onwards," *read* " on"
P. 69, l. 4 from the bottom, *for* " these," *read* " those"
P. 112, l. 3 of stanza at the bottom, *for* " Pass of Dhuie," *read* " Pass of the Dhuie"
P. 122, l. 6 from the bottom, *after* " Cawdor," *insert* " and thence to the Grants of Grant"
P. 166, l. 8 from the bottom, *for* " ever," *read* " now"
P. 186, l. 1, *after* " image," *dele* then
P. 238, l. 8 from the bottom, *for* " highest," *read* " higher"
P. 276, at the bottom, *for* " fued," *read* " feud"
P. 302, l. 1, *for* " stag royal," *read* " royal stag"
P. 327, l. 11, *for* " westward," *read* " eastward"
P. 331, l. 3, *for* " a westerly," *read* " an easterly"
P. 334, l. 9, *dele* " convulsively"
P. 360, l. 8 from the bottom, *for* " nephew," *read* " cousin"

VOL. II.

P. 5, l. 5 from the bottom, *for* " inwards," *read* " in"
P. 28, l. 6 from the bottom, *for* " shall," *read* " shalt"
P. 33, l. 13, *for* " quoad," *read* " quod"
P. 173, l. 12, put inverted commas before " or"
P. 176, l. 6, dele the inverted commas before " Chirsty"
P. 199, l. 14, *for* " arrested and by," *read* " and arrested by"
P. 200, l. 9. insert comma after " her," and dele comma after " mouth"
P. 238, l. 4, *for* " heard or seen," *read* " seen nor heard of"
P. 284, l. 6, *for* " clump," *read* " plump"
P. 304, l. 11, *for* " who," *read* " that," and dele " own" before " wife"
P. 340, l. 5 from the bottom, *for* " or," *read* " nor"
P. 372, l. 4, *for* " she," *read* " he"

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